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A PAROCHIAL COURSE OF DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTIONS

For all Sundays and Holydays of the Year

Based on the Teachings of the Catechism of the Council of Trent and Harmonized with the Gospels and Epistles of the Sundays and Feasts

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Archbishop of New York

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Archbishop of New York

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A PAROCHIAL COURSE OF DOCTRINAL INSTRUCTIONS

PENTECOST SUNDAY

SUBJECT

CONFIRMATION: ITS NECESSITY AND CEREMONIES

TEXT

They were all filled with the Holy Ghost.—Acts ii. 4.

Analysis

Introduction. We have in to-day's Epistle an account of the fulfillment of our Lord's promise to send the Holy Ghost to His Church. In His farewell discourse after the Last Supper the Saviour had told the disciples that it was necessary that He should depart from them, in order to send upon them and upon His Church the Paraclete to be their Comforter and guide, and to teach them all truth. How necessary this coming of the Holy Spirit was for the infallible Church of Christ we can all see. But it was, and still remains necessary for the individual Christian also to receive the same Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Confirmation, so that he may have that strength and fortitude which this Sacrament confers, and which is so needful to lead a life that is truly Christian.

Following our Lord's directions the disciples remained in Jerusalem, awaiting the Holy Spirit, and preparing themselves by fervent prayers during the space of ten days, until the Paraclete as promised descended upon them, in the form of tongues of fire and accompanied by the rush of a mighty wind. The example of the Apostles should teach us how fervently

the Sacrament of Confirmation is to be prepared for, and with what pious dispositions it should be received. As a means to receiving it with greater devotion, a knowledge of the rites and ceremonies which accompany its administration is of great usefulness. After discussing the necessity of the Sacrament, therefore, a few words regarding the meaning of its ceremonies will be timely.

I. **The necessity of Confirmation.** 1. This Sacrament, unlike Baptism, is not indispensable to salvation. Baptism gives spiritual birth; Confirmation affords spiritual increase and strength. 2. All, however, should be confirmed, as all in the Upper Room received the Holy Ghost, because, (a) all of us are in need of the grace of spiritual maturity conferred by Confirmation; (b) God, having given this Sacrament, desires that all should receive the spiritual increase which it offers. 3. Hence those who wilfully neglect to receive Confirmation are not free from sin. 4. The conditions for the reception of this Sacrament are: (a) that a person should have been previously baptized; (b) in the Latin Church, that one have reached his seventh year, or there about (Code, can. 788); (c) that a person be in the state of grace and sufficiently instructed. 5. A devout preparation should precede the reception of Confirmation.

II. **The ceremonies used at Confirmation.** 1. In administrating this Sacrament the Bishop first stretches his hand over those to be confirmed, imploring the Holy Ghost to descend upon them with His seven gifts. 2. Next the Bishop imposes his hands upon the candidates, as the Apostles did (Acts viii. 17; xix. 6), anointing the forehead of each in the form of a cross. The anointing is made on the forehead, where signs of fear and shame are manifested, to give the confirmed to understand that he should not blush at the name of Christian. 3. The Bishop then gives the confirmed a slight blow on the cheek, to remind him that he must be ready to bear all things for the faith of Christ. 4. Finally, the Bishop solemnly blesses all those whom he has confirmed. 5. In memory of the grace

of strength which was conferred on the Apostles at Pentecost, Confirmation is often given on that Feast.

EXHORTATION. 1. Parents and guardians should see that their children and subjects do not fail to receive Confirmation, especially in these evil days when faith is so weak and temptations so strong. 2. On this Feast of Pentecost those who have been already confirmed should strive to awaken the grace they received the day they were confirmed, and to prove themselves not deserters, but loyal members of Christ's army.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

THE SUBJECT OF CONFIRMATION

Since in receiving Confirmation it frequently happens that the faithful are guilty either of thoughtless haste, or of gross neglect and delay, to say nothing of those who are become so impious as to despise and contemn the Sacrament, it is the duty of the pastor to make known who should receive Confirmation and at what age and with which dispositions it should be approached.

CONFIRMATION INSTITUTED FOR THE USE OF ALL THE FAITHFUL

In the first place it should be taught that this Sacrament is not essential to salvation; but that although not essential, it is not therefore to be omitted. On the contrary, in a matter so holy, through which the gifts of God are so liberally bestowed, the greatest care should be taken to avoid all neglect; and what God intended for the sanctification of all, should be desired by all with intense earnestness.[1]

Describing this admirable effusion of the Holy Spirit, St. Luke says: "And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a mighty wind coming, and it filled the *whole* house, where they were sitting"; and a little after, "and they were *all* filled with the Holy Ghost."[2] From these words we may infer that as the house in which they were assembled was a type and figure of the Church,

[1] De consec. dist. 5. c. 2. et 3; C. of Orleans, c. 3; Hugh of St. Victor de Sacram, lib. 2, p. 7. c. 39.
[2] Acts ii. 2, 4.

the Sacrament of Confirmation, which had its existence for the first time on that day, is intended for the use of all the faithful.

This is also an easy inference from the nature of the Sacrament. Confirmation is necessary for those who need spiritual increase and should be brought to the perfection of the Christian religion. But to this all should aspire. For as nature intends that all who are born should grow up and reach full maturity, although her purpose is not always realized, so it is the earnest desire of the Catholic Church, the common mother of all, that those whom she has regenerated by Baptism may be brought to the fullness of manhood in Christ. This happy consummation can be accomplished only through the mystic unction of Confirmation; and hence it is clear that this Sacrament is equally intended for all the faithful.

THE PROPER AGE FOR CONFIRMATION

It should be observed, however, that while the Sacrament of Confirmation may be administered to all, as soon as they have been baptized, it is not expedient to administer it to children who have not reached the use of reason. If not postponed to the age of twelve, it should be deferred until at least that of seven. For Christ did not institute Confirmation as a means necessary for salvation, but as a Sacrament by whose grace we are armed and made ready when called upon to fight for the faith of Christ. Now for this conflict no one will consider children, not yet arrived at the use of reason, fit subjects.

DISPOSITIONS FOR RECEIVING CONFIRMATION

From what has been said it follows that persons of mature years who are to be confirmed must receive this Sacrament, not only with faith and devotion but also with heartfelt compunction for the grievous sins they may have committed. The pastor, therefore, should strive to induce them to go to confession beforehand, to excite them to fasting and other exercises of devotion, and should exhort them to the revival of that laudable practice of the ancient Church of receiving the Sacrament of Confirmation fasting.[3] To

[3] D. Th. p. 3. q. 72; C. of Orleans, c. 2.

induce the faithful to enter into these dispositions would appear no difficult task, if they but learn to appreciate the blessings and extraordinary effects which flow from this Sacrament.

(On the rites and ceremonies of Confirmation see Vol. I, pp. 489, 490.)

Sermons

CONFIRMATION

BY THE REV. W. LIEBER

Be strengthened in the Lord, and in the might of His power. Put you on the armour of God, that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil.—EPH. vi. 10, 11.

CONFIRMATION IS A SACRAMENT

Confirmation is placed second on the list of the Sacraments, for two reasons: The first is that in the early Church it was conferred immediately after Baptism. The second is, that Confirmation is the complement of Baptism. However, we must not think it therefore one and the same Sacrament as the first, nor is it a mere rite or public profession of faith in the presence of the Bishop, as it is understood by our Anglican brethren, but a true, distinct Sacrament. In a remarkable passage (Praescr. 40), Tertullian places this "sealing of the soldiers on the forehead" between Baptism and the Eucharist, plainly indicating thereby that Confirmation is a "true and proper Sacrament" according to the Tridentine doctrine. The same difference that exists in the natural life between birth and growth, exists also in the supernatural, between Baptism, which gives spiritual life, and Confirmation, which strengthens it. By the former we are begotten to newness of life, by the latter, we grow to full maturity, "having put away the things of a child." In Baptism, we are made the temples of the Holy Ghost; in Confirmation, we receive Him in all His plenitude of graces. In Baptism, we are enlisted as soldiers of Jesus Christ; in Confirmation, we are equipped for the battle, and our weapons are handed to us. It is, therefore, a distinct Sacrament, admin-

istered to us by the Bishop, by which we receive the grace of fortitude from the Holy Ghost to profess courageously the Faith we have already received in Baptism. It produces an increase of sanctifying grace, perfecting that which we have already received, granting also an actual grace, consisting of strength to profess our faith openly, and to overcome human respect and to lead thoroughly Christian lives, despite the examples and railleries of the world. But, above all, Confirmation communicates the Holy Ghost to us with all His gifts, and, hence, the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, contribute to our sanctification and our happiness. The Father adopts us in Baptism. The Son gives Himself in Holy Communion. The Holy Spirit gives Himself in Confirmation, and lavishes on our souls the same inward graces and gifts with which He strengthened the Apostles. All these effects of Confirmation are typified by the sacramental sign and the ceremonial that accompany its administration.

MATTER OF CONFIRMATION

The remote matter of this Sacrament is holy chrism, a mixture of olive oil and Eastern balsam. There are three kinds of holy oils used in the administration of the Sacraments, and which the Bishop consecrates on Maundy Thursday: the oil of catechumens, used in Baptism, the oil for the sick, used in Extreme Unction, and holy chrism, the remote matter of Confirmation. "Nor, indeed," says the Catechism of the Council of Trent, "could any other matter than that of chrism seem more appropriate to declare the effects of this Sacrament; for oil, by its nature unctuous and fluid, expresses the plenitude of grace, which, through the Holy Ghost, overflows and is poured into others from Christ, the head, "like the anointment on the head that ran down upon the beard of Aaron, to the skirt of his garment" (Ps. cxxxii. 2); for him "God anointed with the oil of gladness above" his fellows (Ps. xliv. 8), and "of his fulness we have all received" (St. John i. 16).

Chrism, as we have already said, is a mixture of balsam and olive oil. Balsam is an oily substance, more or less liquid,

naturally flowing from some Eastern trees when an incision is made on them. It is very odoriferous and endowed with medicinal properties. Its perfume is symbolical of the fragrance of virtue, which a confirmed Christian ought to spread about him, for, according to the Apostle, "we are the good odor of Christ and God" for the edification of the faithful. Balsam is also a preservative against corruption. This Sacrament helps to preserve us from the corruption of sin. The effect of oil, on the other hand, is to soften and to add vigor. It, moreover, diffuses an agreeable light when enkindled. So in Confirmation our hearts are softened, yet invigorated, and our minds illuminated from above. As the ancient athletes were anointed before their contests in the arena, so the young soldier of Christ is prepared for the "good fight" which lies before him. Both the oil and balsam are symbolical of Christian humility and meekness, for balsam sinks into the liquid, into which it is poured, and thereby denotes humility; whereas oil always floats on the surface, teaching man to rise superior to the vexations of life by unfailing meekness. We shall now see how holy chrism is applied in Confirmation.

CEREMONIAL OF CONFIRMATION

The following is the ceremonial observed: The Bishop, seated, washes his hands to show the great purity required for the reception and administration of this Sacrament, puts on his rochet, the symbol of innocence, his stole, the sign of his authority, and, vested in his cope, gives an instruction to the candidates. After this, he makes over them the following invocations: "May the Holy Ghost descend on you, and may the virtue of the Most High preserve you from all sin. Our help is in the name of the Lord." The assistants answer: "Who made heaven and earth." "O Lord, hear my prayer," adds the Bishop, and the assistants join in: "And let my cry come unto Thee." Spreading his hands over those to be confirmed, he proceeds with the following prayer: "O eternal and almighty God, who hast vouchsafed to regenerate with water and the Holy Ghost Thy servants and Who hast granted them

the forgiveness of all their sins, send upon them from the summit of heaven Thy Paraclete, the author of all gifts. Amen. The Spirit of wisdom and understanding. Amen. The spirit of counsel and fortitude. Amen. The spirit of knowledge and piety. Amen. Fill them with the spirit of fear, and calling them to eternal life, sign them with the sign of the Cross of Jesus Christ, our Lord, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee, in the unity of the same Holy Ghost for ever and ever. Amen." During this prayer the receivers of Confirmation kneel and endeavor by their devotion to enter into the feelings of the Blessed Virgin and the Apostles when they were expecting the Holy Ghost with His sevenfold gift. They ask for the spirit of *wisdom,* that they may once for all understand wherein consists man's true felicity. The spirit of *understanding,* that by His divine light they may acquire the knowledge of the truths and mysteries of religion. The spirit of *counsel,* to discern the mode of action in difficult situations of life, and thus ever accomplish God's holy will. The spirit of *strength,* in order to resist vigorously the assaults of the enemies of salvation. The spirit of *knowledge,* to realize the greatness of God and both the nobility and misery of their souls. The spirit of *piety,* to enable them to carry out with cheerfulness and love all that may be pleasing to God. The spirit of *fear,* which prevents the commission even of the slightest fault against God.

The candidates are then led to the altar by their Godparents or sponsors, who are required for Confirmation as well as for Baptism. Young soldiers require a drill-master to train them in the arts of attack and defense. With much more reason do the soldiers of Christ require a skilful instructor to teach them the manner of using the powerful weapons placed in their hands. Their "wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and power, against the spirit of wickedness in the high places." They approach singly and kneel before the Bishop, who, with the chrism we have spoken of, makes upon their forehead the Sign of the Cross, saying: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Then he gives them a

slight blow upon the cheek, saying: "Peace be with thee." When all have been confirmed, the Bishop purifies his hands, while an antiphon is sung, beseeching God to complete the work which He has begun. At the conclusion of this the Bishop rises, looking towards the altar, says the versicles and prayer; then, turning towards the confirmed, he gives them his blessing in these words: "May the Lord bless you from the height of heaven, that all the days of your lives you may see the good things of Jerusalem, and that you may obtain eternal life." Having given the newly confirmed another address, called the "admonition," he enjoins them to repeat the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Angelic Salutation, which they do before leaving the church. All now depart after the rendering of the Psalm, "Laudate Dominum," which is most appropriate as an expression of gratitude and gladness for the blessings received. From this ceremonial, we clearly notice the proximate matter and form of Confirmation. The proximate matter is the unction with chrism applied through the imposition of hands, and the form are the words pronounced during the unction: "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross, and I confirm thee with the chrism of salvation, in the name," etc.

Now, a form ought to express all that is contained in a Sacrament; we find, therefore, that these words are most suitable as expressing three elements: the cause, the effect, and the sign. The cause which conveys the plenitude of spiritual strength is the ever-blessed Trinity expressed by the words "in the name of the Father, . . ." The effect is the spiritual strength communicated by the Sacrament, and is expressed by the unction accompanied by the words, "I confirm thee . . ." The sign which is given to the Christian soldier is expressed by the word "I sign thee with the Sign of the Cross," the great symbol by which our great Captain Jesus conquered, and by which we shall conquer. The unction is made on the forehead for a very appropriate reason. The sign of the soldier must be conspicuous. According to the Angelic Doctor, two obstacles stand in the way of a manful confession of our Lord: fear and shame. These two feelings are manifested chiefly on the forehead: fear whitens it, shame reddens it. Hence the

sacred unction is made on the forehead to teach him who is confirmed that neither fear nor shame ought ever to hinder him from appearing a Christian. That the grace of Confirmation dispels fear and puts down shame, we may see from the effects of the Holy Ghost on the apostles. At the time of the Passion they were so fearful and timid that they took to flight as soon as they saw their Master arrested. Peter himself, their head and leader, was frightened at the voice of a woman and cowardly denied our Lord, and all the apostles shut themselves up in a house for fear of the Jews. Pentecost comes, the Holy Ghost descends upon them and lo, they are changed men, filled with fortitude; they display undaunted courage. From being lambs of bashfulness, they turn lions of bravery. They face the Jews and reproach them with Deicide. They are no longer ashamed of the Master, but glory in His Cross. This same fortitude they convey in Confirmation to their disciples, who, at their example, face persecution and torments rather than renounce their faith. Daily exposed to the risk of being dragged from the font to the amphitheater, Confirmation was given them immediately after Baptism, as it is still done in some countries. Pentecost is a subsisting mystery in the Church. The same spirit that fortified the apostles and the early Christians descends still actually and verily upon us, not indeed with the same splendor and prodigy, but with the same inward effects of fortitude. What ought we to think, then, of so many Christians who are ashamed to declare their faith, who remain silent when they should speak, who remain idle when they should act, but that they resist the grace received in Confirmation. You, at least, brethren, as true disciples of Christ, should be ever disposed openly and resolutely to confess His Name; be not ashamed of the gospel maxims; never show a cowardly fear of men. Trample on human respect, not only speak up, but labor with courage for the cause of God and His Church, according to your ability never being disheartened at the greatness of the obstacles you shall have to surmount. The Spirit of God will afford you strength to overcome the world. After anointing the forehead with chrism, the Bishop gives the confirmed a slight blow on the cheek, to

warn him that he must be ready to suffer for Christ. This rite reminds us of a similar ceremony enacted in the days of chivalry, when young warriors were dubbed knights by a smart blow of the sword. This ceremony was preceded by fasting, confession, and a midnight vigil in the church, followed by the reception of holy Communion. The new knight offered his sword on the altar to signify his devotion to the Church and his determination to lead a holy life. It was blessed and buckled on generally by a Bishop. The title was conferred by fastening the sword and spurs on the candidate, after which the person who conferred the order dealt him a blow on the shoulder, saying: "Be thou a good and faithful knight." The new knight then took a solemn oath to protect the distressed, to maintain right against might, and never by word or deed to stain his character as a knight and a Christian. The symbolical blow in Confirmation teaches that the soldier of Jesus Christ must be disposed to suffer blows and persecution for the practice of religion. As a knight, he must prepare by prayer and the reception of the Sacraments, and be determined to lead a holy life, and promise God never by word or deed to stain his character as a Christian and soldier of Christ. He must be ready to sacrifice all things, even his life, if necessary, for the sake of God and religion.

NECESSITY OF CONFIRMATION

People will say: "Persecutions have ceased. No longer, as in the early ages, do tyrants arise to rob us of the treasure of Faith." True, brethren, in this age of religious tolerance no coercion is generally used to make us apostatize. Fire and sword are no longer resorted to, in order to tear the faith from our hearts; still, a sharp, cruel instrument of torture is in store for those who wish to remain staunch knights of Christ Jesus; it is the tongue of man, ready to vomit blasphemy against religion, ridicule upon her dogmas and practices, bitter railleries at anyone determined to live up to the standard of Christian perfection and to refuse to follow the mass of pleasure-seekers and of slaves of worldly maxims and customs.

A Christian requires great strength, indeed, to resist these insidious assaults and keep aloof from the numerous allurements of the age. Suppose the world has no attractions for you, will not Satan step in and try to tempt you? Ah, Scripture tells you that this your adversary, like a roaring lion, "goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." And yet there is another enemy even more dangerous and more to be feared, because he dwells within our very selves. It is our concupiscence, our flesh lusting against the Spirit, that foe of which the Apostle speaks as fighting against the law of our mind and captivating us in the law of sin.

"Life on earth is all a warfare. Therefore, take you the armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day," the day of temptation. Be not disheartened at the thought of your weakness. The grace of Confirmation will prove a powerful weapon when needed. "Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth and having on the breastplate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. In all things taking the shield of faith, whereby you may extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one and take unto you the helmet of salvation; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God." Amen.

Confirmation

by the very rev. bede jarrett, o.p.

sufferings are intended as a confirmation of our faith

For our Blessed Lord His Passion and death were to be the confirmation of faith: and He hoped these would be so also for His apostles. He foretold them the coming of persecution, His own first, and theirs also: "The disciple is not above his Master." Well, the world was going to lay upon Him the evils of pain and loneliness, severing Him from all that humanly made life supportable. The rulers of His own nation would disown Him as one of their own people, renounce in their jealousy of Him all their political ideals, and despite

the revolt against the domination of Rome, proclaim in public before their foreign ruler, that they had no king but Cæsar. Since He had been treated in that fashion, He warned them that if they were really loyal to Him, they could not expect for themselves any other treatment. Moreover, He took particular care to point out to them this prophecy, so that they should remember it in the day of their tribulation, and, instead of becoming cast down or discouraged because of their hardships, these last would only the more decisively prove His claim to divinity by fulfilling His prediction. You see it might seem to them that if they were successfully persecuted, His protection of them must have failed, and they might be tempted in their agony to deny His Godhead. Now, however, they could view their sufferings at least with no shock or loss to faith, for after all, these very sufferings were only what He had foretold, so that instead of being scandalized by their lot, they would become all the more confirmed in their belief in Him. To them, therefore, the very trials they would be called on to undergo, would only deepen faith: "These things I have told you, that, when their hour shall come, you may remember that I told you."'

OUR NEED OF THE SACRAMENT OF CONFIRMATION

Now, certainly it would be a very great thing if we could discover some way of making capital out of the very trials of life, becoming the better Catholics because of the opposition we encounter from within and from without. We want some alchemy that will transmute for us into pure gold the base metal of this present life. That alchemy is given us through the Sacrament of Confirmation, for by its grace the evils of life become encouragements to the love of God. First of all, it is a Sacrament, having as its outward sign the consecrated oil and the spoken words of the Bishop or priest delegated by the Holy See, as its inward grace the strengthening of the soul to meet life's hardships unafraid and indeed with welcome, and further it has been established by Christ our Lord. We have not actually any text of the Gospels to prove that Our Blessed

Lord instituted the Sacrament of Confirmation, but we find it referred to in the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of St. Paul as being part of the apostolic liturgy, and, we, therefore, consider we have the right to claim that this Sacrament would not have been immediately introduced except through the express ordination of our Lord. But the purpose of the Sacrament is its chiefest consideration here. It is to make us true and perfect Christians; to complete the work begun in us by Baptism, to confirm us in faith, hope, and love. It is given, therefore, normally, just at the age when we are beginning to find it difficult to serve God properly. As children, the service of God seems to be possible in its fulness only when we were grown up. Actually, however, we find that age makes things not easier but harder. When we were small children, we thought only children were naughty, and grown-up people always right; but as we grow up ourselves we look upon our childhood as our most innocent time. Just, therefore, when we find life growing more difficult, both within and without, from the temptations of our own heart that develop with our physical growth, and from the jeers, sneers, arguments of others, we need most a divine aid to preserve us from evil. We want something as we stand on the border line between childhood and youth, to deepen our character, strengthen and develop it. That something comes to us in the Sacrament of Confirmation.

HOW CONFIRMATION STRENGTHENS US

Note, therefore, first of all how this strength comes to us. It is produced in us by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. We are confirmed, made strong, because in some new fashion the Holy Ghost works in us. What is this new fashion? It is a perception, a vision, a feeling of God's presence in the world, our world. You remember that we spoke of the Sacrament of Confirmation as something that enables us to make capital out of the buffets of the world, to gain strength out of persecution, ease out of discomfort, faith out of apparent divine failure, the resurrection out of the crucifixion. Well, by means of the

sevenfold gifts infused into us at the moment of our reception of this Sacrament, we become susceptible to God's presence in the midst of all our troubles, for the gifts are not virtues, i.e., acts of ours, they are the act of God. It is He who moves, touches the soul, and by means of these gifts, lets us see how near He is to us; by counsel we see His way and will for ourselves and others, not through our merit but His showing, by understanding we see Him in the material things of life, by knowledge in the intellectual principles and in the truths of faith, the immaterial creation, by wisdom we see that neither earth nor heaven are separated, but in God's vision are both equally full of Himself, by fortitude we find force or strength from the glimpse given us of His nearness, so that the vale of the shadow cannot cast fear on us, by piety we are softened to devotion, by fear we are braced to reverence: every way made conscious of His nearness, and gathering strength out of it. Again, we do not merit by having gifts, but we can establish habits of goodness, and so acquire merit by using the gifts. Moreover, they are operative whenever we care to make use of them, for Confirmation has no need to be repeated. Whenever we are in a state of grace, we have these gifts and can use them for our comfort.

References

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For a complete treatment of the Liturgy see *Pulpit Commentary,* Vol. IV.

TRINITY SUNDAY

SUBJECT

BAPTISM: ITS MINISTERS, SPONSORS, AND SUBJECTS

TEXT

All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. Going, therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.—MATT. xxviii. 18, 19.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. At the solemn and formal reunion in Galilee of our risen Saviour and His Apostles and disciples, our Lord, now enjoying the exercise of absolute power and authority, commissioned His chosen representatives to go forth into the whole world and make known to all nations the revelation He had given them, and to invite all to membership in His Church. This entry into the fold of Christ, so essential to eternal salvation, was to be effected by the reception of Baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

I. **The minister of Baptism.** 1. By virtue of their office Bishops and parish priests are the ministers of this Sacrament. 2. In case of necessity any person may baptize, provided he uses the proper matter and form and has the intention of doing what the Church does in baptizing. Since this Sacrament is absolutely necessary for salvation, our Lord wishes all who have the use of reason to be able to confer it; but in its private administration a priest is to be preferred to a layman, and a man to a woman unless a woman would be more skilful than a man, or reasons of propriety should demand her ministry.

II. **The sponsors of Baptism.** 1. According to a very ancient practice in the Church sponsors take part in the celebration of

Baptism. These sponsors are supposed to see that their spiritual children are instructed in the faith and live up to its requirements. 2. Sponsors must be others than the parents, and are required to be Catholics of good life. 3. The Church has legislated regarding sponsors: (a) that the sponsor contracts a spiritual affinity with the godchild which is an impediment to marriage between them: (b) that there should be one, or at most two, godparents, a godfather and a godmother.

III. **The subjects of Baptism.** 1. The Sacrament of Baptism is absolutely necessary for salvation for all, according to the words of Christ (John iii. 5). 2. The absence of Baptism of water can be supplied in two ways: (a) by martyrdom, which is called *Baptism of blood;* (b) by an act of perfect love of God, or of contrition, along with the desire, at least implicit, of Baptism of water, and this is called *Baptism of desire.* 3. The law of Baptism extends to infants as we know from Scripture (Acts xvi. 33; 1 Cor. i. 16), from the Fathers and Apostolic tradition, from the fact that infants also incur the guilt of original sin, etc. 4. Adults who have not been baptized should be invited to accept the faith and urged to prepare for and receive this Sacrament. Unnecessary delay in receiving Baptism deprives one of the grace of this and of the other Sacraments. 5. The following conditions for Baptism are necessary in adults: (a) the will to receive this Sacrament; (b) faith; (c) compunction for sin with a firm purpose of amendment.

Lessons. 1. Since this Sacrament is so essential to salvation and all who have the use of reason can administer it, the necessity of knowing how to confer it is obvious. This is particularly true of nurses, physicians, and the like. 2. Those who have become godfathers and godmothers should be mindful of their obligations. 3. It is a grave sin in parents to delay the Baptism of their children beyond a reasonable time. 4. We should never forget the goodness of God manifested in the grace of Baptism, nor cease to remember the promises made in our name at the baptismal font.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

THE MINISTERS OF THE SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM

In the next place, it appears not only expedient but necessary to say who are ministers of this Sacrament; both in order that those to whom this office is specially confided may study to perform its functions religiously and holily; and that no one, cutstepping, as it were, his proper limits, may unseasonably take possession of, or arrogantly assume, what belongs to another, for, as the Apostle teaches, order is to be observed in all things.[1]

THE ORDINARY MINISTERS

The faithful therefore are to be informed that of those who administer Baptism there are three gradations. Bishops and priests hold the first place. To them belongs the administration of this Sacrament, not by any extraordinary concession of power, but by right of office; for to them, in the persons of the Apostles, was addressed the command: "Go, baptize."[2] Bishops, it is true, in order not to neglect the more weighty charge of instructing the faithful, generally leave its administration to priests. But the authority of the Fathers,[3] and the usage of the Church, prove that priests exercise this function of the ministry by a right inherent in the priestly order—a right which authorizes them to baptize even in presence of the Bishop. Ordained to consecrate the Holy Eucharist, the Sacrament of peace and unity,[4] it is necessary that they be invested with power to administer all those things, which are required to enable others to participate in that peace and unity. If, therefore, the Fathers have at any time said that without the leave of the Bishop the priest has not power to baptize, they are to be understood to speak of that Baptism only which was

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 40.
[2] Matt. xxviii. i. 19.
[3] Isid., lib. 2 de offic. Eccles. cap. 4.
[4] 1 Cor. x. 17.

administered on certain days of the year with solemn ceremonies.

Next to Bishops and priests, are deacons, for whom, as numerous decrees of the holy Fathers attest, it is not lawful without the permission of the Bishop or priest to administer Baptism.[5]

THE MINISTERS IN CASE OF NECESSITY

Those who may administer Baptism in case of necessity, but without its solemn ceremonies, hold the third and last place; and in this class are included all, even the laity, men and women, to whatever sect they may belong. This power extends in case of necessity, even to Jews, infidels, and heretics, provided, however, they intend to do what the Catholic Church does in that act of her ministry. Already established by the decrees of the ancient Fathers and Councils, these things have been again confirmed by the Council of Trent, which denounces anathema against those who prefer to say, "that Baptism, even when administered by heretics, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, with the intention of doing what the Church does, is not true Baptism." [6]

And here let us admire the supreme goodness and wisdom of our Lord, who, seeing the necessity of this Sacrament for all, not only instituted water, than which nothing can be more common, as its matter, but also placed its administration within the power of all. In its administration, however, as we have already observed, all are not allowed to use the solemn ceremonies; not that rites and ceremonies are of higher dignity, but because they are less necessary than the Sacrament.

Let not the faithful, however, imagine that this office is given promiscuously to all, so as to do away with the propriety of observing a certain precedence among those who administer Baptism. When a man is present a woman should not baptize;

[5] Distinct. 93. cap. 13.

[6] Sess. 7. can. 4; de consec. dist. 4. cap. 24; Aug., lib. 7. contra Donatist. cap. 51; lib. 3. cap. 10; lib. 2. contra Parmen; C. of Lat. cap. 1; C. of Flor. in decree of Pope Eugene.

an ecclesiastic takes precedence over a layman, and a priest over a simple ecclesiastic. Midwives, however, when accustomed to its administration, are not to be found fault with, if sometimes, when a man is present who is unacquainted with the manner of its administration, they perform what may otherwise appear to belong more properly to men.

THE SPONSORS AT BAPTISM

Besides the ministers who, as just explained, confer Baptism, another class of persons according to the most ancient practice of the Church, is admitted to assist at the baptismal font. In former times these were commonly called by sacred writers sponsors or sureties, and are now called godfathers and godmothers.[7] As this is an office pertaining almost to all the laity, the pastor will teach its principal duties with care and accuracy.

He will in the first instance explain why at Baptism, besides those who administer the Sacrament, godfathers and godmothers are also required. The propriety of the practice will at once appear, if we keep in view the nature of Baptism, which is a spiritual regeneration by which we are born children of God; for of it St. Peter says: "As newborn infants, desire the rational milk without guile."[8] As, therefore, everyone, after his birth, requires a nurse and instructor by whose assistance and attention he is brought up and formed to learning and useful knowledge, so those, who, by the efficacy of the regenerating waters of Baptism, are born to spiritual life should be intrusted to the fidelity and prudence of someone from whom they may imbibe the precepts of the Christian religion, and the spirit of Christian piety, and thus grow up gradually in Christ, until, with the divine assistance, they at length arrive at the full growth of perfect manhood. This necessity must appear still more imperative, if we recollect that the pastor, who is charged with the public care of his parish, has not sufficient time to undertake the private instruction of children in the rudiments of faith. Concerning this very ancient practice we have this noteworthy testimony of St. Denis: "It occurred

[7] Tert., 1. de bapt. c. 18, et de coron. milit. cap. 3.
[8] 1 Pet. ii. 2.

to our divine leaders" (so he called the Apostles), "and they in their wisdom ordained that infants should be introduced into the Church in this holy manner, that their natural parents should deliver them to the care of some one well skilled in divine things, as to a master under whom, as a spiritual father and guardian of his salvation in holiness, the child may lead the remainder of his life." [9] The same doctrine is confirmed by the authority of Hyginus.[10]

The Church therefore in her wisdom has ordained that not only the person who baptizes contracts a spiritual affinity with the person baptized, but also the sponsor with the godchild and its parents, so that marriage cannot be lawfully contracted by them, and if contracted, it is null and void. [11]

DUTIES OF SPONSORS

The faithful are also to be taught the duty of sponsors; for such is the negligence with which the office of sponsor is treated in the Church, that only the bare name of the function remains, while few, if any, have the least idea of its sanctity. Let all sponsors then at all times recollect that they are strictly bound to exercise a constant vigilance over their spiritual children, and carefully to instruct them in the maxims of a Christian life; that they may show themselves through life to be what their sponsors promised in the solemn ceremony. On this subject the words of St. Denis demand attention. Speaking in the person of the sponsor he says: "I promise, by my constant exhortations to induce this child, when he comes to a knowledge of religion, to renounce every thing opposed to his Christian calling, and to profess and perform the sacred promises which he made at the baptismal font."[12] St. Augustine also says: "I most earnestly admonish you, men and women, who have become sponsors, to consider that you stood as sureties before God, for those whose sponsors

[9] Dionys. de Eccl. Hier. c. 7. parte 3.

[10] De consec. dist. 5. cap. 100; Leo, pp. ib. c. 101; C. of Mainz ibid. cap. 101; 30. q. 1.

[11] Under the New Code of Canon Law the diriment impediment of spiritual affinity exists only between: (a) the person baptized and the baptizer, (b) the person baptized and the sponsor (Canon 1079). —Ed.

[12] L. c. 64.

you have undertaken to become." [13] And indeed it is the paramount duty of every man, who undertakes any office, to be indefatigable in the discharge of the duties which it imposes; and he who solemnly professed to be the teacher and guardian of another should not abandon to destitution him whom he once received under his care and protection, as long as the latter may have occasion for either. Speaking of the duties of sponsors, St. Augustine comprises in a few words the lessons of instruction which they are bound to impart to their spiritual children. "They ought," he says, "to admonish them to observe chastity, love justice, cherish charity; and above all they should teach them the Creed, the Lord's prayer, the ten Commandments, and the rudiments of the Christian religion." [14]

WHO MAY NOT BE SPONSORS

It is not difficult, therefore, to decide who are inadmissible as sponsors. To those who are unwilling to discharge its duties with fidelity, or who cannot do so with care and accuracy, this sacred trust should not be confided. Wherefore, besides the natural parents, who, to mark the great difference that exists between this spiritual and the carnal bringing up of youth, are not permitted to undertake this charge, heretics, Jews and infidels, are on no account to be admitted to the office of sponsor, since they are continually employed in darkening, by falsehood, the true faith and in subverting all Christian piety.[15]

NUMBER OF SPONSORS

The number of sponsors is limited by the Council of Trent to one godfather or one godmother; or at most, to a godfather and a godmother; because a number of teachers may confuse the order of discipline and instruction, and also to prevent the multiplication of affinities, which must impede a wider diffusion of society by means of lawful marriage.[16]

[13] Serm. 163. de temp. et ser. 215.
[14] Serm. 165, de temp. de cons. dist. 4. c. 120.
[15] 30. q. 1 cap. 1; St. Thom., p. 3. q. 67. art. 8. ad 2; C. of Mainz in de consec. dist. 4. cap. 102.
[16] De conc. dist. 4, c. 101; C. of Trent, sess. 14. c. 12. de refor. Matrim.

THE SUBJECT OF BAPTISM

If the knowledge of what has been hitherto explained, be, as it is, of highest importance to the faithful, it is no less important to them to know, that the law of Baptism, as established by our Lord, extends to all, so that unless they are regenerated to God through the grace of Baptism, be their parents Christians or infidels, they are born to eternal misery and everlasting destruction. The duty of the pastor, therefore, demands of him a frequent exposition of these words of the Gospel: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.[17]

INFANT BAPTISM

That this law extends not only to adults but also to infants, and that the Church has received this from Apostolic tradition is confirmed by the unanimous teaching and authority of the Fathers.

Besides, it is not to be supposed that Christ our Lord would have withheld the Sacrament and grace of Baptism from children, of whom He said: "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come to me; for the kingdom of heaven is for such";[18] whom also He embraced, upon whom He imposed hands, to whom He gave His blessing.[19]

Moreover, when we read that an entire family was baptized by St. Paul,[20] it is obvious that the children of the family must also have been cleansed by the purifying waters of Baptism.

Circumcision too, which was a figure of Baptism, affords a strong argument in proof of this primitive practice. That children were circumcised on the eighth day is universally known.[21] If then circumcision, "made by hand, in despoiling of the body of the flesh,"[22] was profitable to children, shall not Baptism, which

[17] John iii. 5. On this see Pope Clem., epist. 4. in the middle; Aug., in Joan. tract. 13; de Eccles. dogm. cap. 14; Amb., de iis qui myst. initiantur, c. 4; C. of Later., c. 1; C. of Trent, sess. 7, can. 51.
[18] Matt. xix. 14.
[19] Mark x. 16.
[20] 1 Cor. i. 16; Acts xvi. 33.
[21] Gen. xxi. 4; Lev. xii. 3; Luke i. 59; ii. 21.
[22] Coloss. ii. 11.

is the circumcision of Christ, not "made by hand," be also profitable to them?

Finally, to use the words of the Apostle, "if by one man's offence death reigned through one, much more they who receive abundance of grace, and of the gift, and of justice, shall reign in life through one, Jesus Christ." [23] If, then, through the transgression of Adam, children inherit original sin, is there not still stronger reason to conclude, that the efficacious merits of Christ the Lord must impart to them that justice and those graces, which will give them a title to reign in eternal life? This happy consummation Baptism alone can accomplish.[24]

The pastor, therefore, will inculcate the absolute necessity of administering Baptism to infants, and of gradually forming their tender minds to piety, by Christian precept. For according to these admirable words of the wise man: "A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it.[25]

HOW FAITH IS IMPARTED TO INFANTS IN BAPTISM

It cannot be doubted that in Baptism infants receive the mysterious gifts of faith; not that they believe with the assent of the mind, but by the faith of their parents, if the parents profess the true faith; if not (to use the words of St. Augustine), "by that of the universal society of the saints;" [26] for they are said with propriety to be presented for Baptism by all those to whom their initiation in that sacred rite was a source of joy, and by whose charity they are united to the communion of the Holy Ghost.

CHILDREN TO BE BAPTIZED WITH AS LITTLE DELAY AS POSSIBLE

The faithful are earnestly to be exhorted to take care that their children be brought to the church, as soon as it can be done with safety, to receive solemn Baptism. Since infants cannot

[23] Rom. v. 17.

[24] C. of Trent, sess. 5. decret. de peccato Origin; sess. 7. de baptismo cap. 12—14; Dionys., de Eccles. Hier. cap. 7; Cyprian., ep. 59; Aug., epist. 28; lib. 1. de peccat. merit. c. 23; Chrys., hom. de Adamo et Evâ; C. of Milevi, c. 2; de consec. dist. 4. passim.

[25] Prov. xxii. 6.

[26] Ep. 23 ad Bon.

enter heaven except through Baptism, we may easily understand how grievously those persons sin who through negligence permit them to remain without the grace of the Sacrament longer than necessity may require, particularly at an age so tender as to be exposed to numberless dangers of death.[27]

With regard to adults who enjoy the perfect use of reason, persons, for instance, born of infidel parents, the practice of the primitive Church points out a different manner of proceeding. To them the Christian faith is to be proposed; and they are earnestly to be exhorted, persuaded, and invited to embrace it. If converted to the Lord God, they are then to be admonished not to defer Baptism beyond the time prescribed by the Church. For since it is written, "delay not to be converted to the Lord, and defer it not from day to day," [28] they are to be taught that in their regard perfect conversion consists in regeneration by Baptism. Besides, the longer they defer Baptism, the longer are they deprived of the use and graces of the other Sacraments, which fortify in the practice of the Christian religion, since the other Sacraments are accessible through Baptism only. They are also deprived of the inestimable graces of Baptism, the salutary waters of which not only wash away all the stains of past sins, but also enrich the soul with divine grace, which enables the Christian to avoid sin for the future, and preserve the invaluable treasures of righteousness and innocence, which assuredly constitute the sum of a Christian life.[29]

On adults, however, the Church does not confer Baptism hastily, but defers it for a certain time. The delay is not attended with the same danger as in the case of infants, which we have already mentioned; should any unforeseen accident deprive adults of Baptism, their intention of receiving it, and their repentance for past sins, will avail them to grace and righteousness. Nay, this delay seems to be attended with some advantages. And first, since the Church must take particular care that none approach this Sacrament through hyprocrisy and dissimulation, by the inter-

[27] Aug., lib. 3 de orig. anim. c. 9; lib. 1. de pecc. merit. c. 2; ep. 28. cap. 1.

[28] Eccl. v. 8.

[29] Tertul., lib. de pœnit. cap. 6; de præscript. cap. 41; Cypr., epist. 15; de cons. dist. 4. cc. 64, 65; Aug., lib. de fide et operib. c. 9.

vention of some delay the intentions of such as seek Baptism, are better ascertained. In this wise precaution originated a decree, passed by the ancient Councils, the purport of which was, that Jewish converts, before admission to Baptism, should spend some months in the ranks of the Catechumens. Furthermore, the candidate for Baptism is thus better instructed in the faith which he is to profess, and in the morality which he is to practice. Finally, when Baptism is administered to adults with solemn ceremonies on the appointed days of Easter and Pentecost only, greater religious reverence is shown to the Sacrament.

Sometimes, however, when there exists a just cause to exclude delay, as in the case of imminent danger of death, Baptism is not to be deferred, particularly if the person to be baptized is well instructed in the mysteries of faith. This we find to have been done by Philip, and by the prince of the Apostles, when, without any delay, the one baptized the eunuch of Queen Candace; the other, Cornelius, as soon as they professed a willingness to embrace the faith.[30]

DISPOSITIONS FOR BAPTISM: I. INTENTION.

The faithful are also to be instructed in the necessary dispositions for Baptism. In the first place, they must desire and intend to receive it; for as in Baptism we die to sin and resolve to live a new life, it is fit that it be administered to those only who receive it of their own free will and accord; it is to be forced upon none. Hence we learn from holy tradition that it has been the invariable practice to administer Baptism to no individual without previously asking him if he be willing to receive it.[31] This disposition even infants are presumed to have, since the will of the Church, which promises for them, is declared in explicit terms.

Insane persons who were once of sound mind and afterwards became deranged, having at that time no wish to be baptized, are not to be admitted to Baptism, unless in danger of death. In such cases, if previously to their insanity they give intimation of a wish

[30] Acts viii. 38, and x. 48.
[31] Aug., lib. de pœn. medi. c. 2; St. Thomas, 3. p. q. 63. aa. 5, 7.

to be baptized, the Sacrament is to be administered; without such indication previously given, it is not to be administered.[32]

The same rule is to be followed as with regard to persons who are asleep. But if they never enjoyed the use of reason, the authority and practice of the Church decide that they are to be baptized in the faith of the Church, just as children are baptized before they come to the use of reason.

2. FAITH.

Besides a wish to be baptized, in order to obtain the grace of the Sacrament, faith for the same reason is also necessary. Our Lord has said: "He that believes and is baptized shall be saved." [33]

3. REPENTANCE

Another necessary condition is repentance for past sins, and a fixed determination to avoid all sin in the future. Should any one desire Baptism and be unwilling to correct his habit of sinning, he should be altogether rejected. For nothing is so opposed to the grace and power of Baptism as the intention and purpose of those who resolve never to abandon sin. Since Baptism should be sought with a view to put on Christ and to be united to Him, it is manifest that he who purposes to continue in sin should be repelled from the sacred font, particularly if we recollect that none of those things which belong to Christ and His Church are to be received in vain, and that, as far as regards sanctifying and saving grace, Baptism is received in vain by him who purposes to live according to the flesh, and not according to the spirit.[34] As far, however, as the validity of the Sacrament is concerned, if the person who is rightly baptized intends to receive what the Church administers, he without doubt validly receives the Sacrament. Hence to the vast multitude, who in compunction of heart, as the Scripture says, asked him and the other Apostles what they should do, Peter answered: "Do penance and be bap-

[32] St. Thomas, 3. p. q. 168. ar 12.
[33] Mark xvi. 14.
[34] Rom. viii. 1.

tized, every one of you";[35] and in another place he said: "Be penitent, therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out."[36] Writing to the Romans, St. Paul also clearly shows that he who is baptized should entirely die to sin; and he therefore admonishes us, not to yield our members as instruments of iniquity unto sin, but present ourselves to God, as those who are alive from the dead.[37]

Frequent reflection upon these truths cannot fail, in the first place, to fill the minds of the faithful with admiration for the infinite goodness of God, who, uninfluenced by any other consideration than that of His own tender mercy, gratuitously bestowed upon us, undeserving as we are, a blessing so extraordinary and divine as that of Baptism.

If in the next place they consider how spotless should be the lives of those who have been made the objects of such singular munificence, they cannot fail to be convinced of the imperative obligation imposed upon them, to spend each day of their lives in such sanctity and fervor, as if on that very day they had received the Sacrament and grace of Baptism. To inflame the minds of the faithful, however, with a zeal for true piety, the pastor will find no means more efficacious than an accurate exposition of the effects of Baptism.

Sermon

The Sacrament of Baptism

BY THE REV. F. M. HARVEY

"Amen! Amen! I say to you, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost he can not enter the kingdom of heaven."—Matt. xxviii. 19.

THE SUBJECTS OF BAPTISM

The kingdom of heaven is opened, as it were, by the water of Baptism, and all who would enter must pass through the cleansing stream. All men are called upon to enter the Church of God.

[35] Acts ii. 38.
[36] Acts iii. 19.
[37] Rom. vi. 13.

To those who have lived only the natural life, whose motives are selfish instincts, whose passions have never known the restraints of conscience, and whose external life has been but the expression of worldly policy, there must be a change of heart, followed, when instruction has done its work, by the Sacrament of Baptism. Others who have been brought up in some faith alien to Christ's Church, be they pagans, Jews, or heretics, must undergo a change of mind as well as heart. They must change the whole opinion of the head respecting religion, as well as the bent of the heart. Their nominal and intellectual belief must undergo a radical change; but that is not sufficient, they must make entrance into Christ's kingdom through the Sacrament of Baptism.

The children of Catholic parents are candidates *ipso facto* for spiritual adoption. In a sense, they are "sanctified from the womb," they pass into Christ's Church as they pass into the conscious experience of life. Children so born are to be received into the arms of their parents and treated as the sacred property of God's Church. The Church lays claim to them at the very outset as her own. She supposes that they will walk from their childhood in newness of life, and to that end is her prayer for them. Properly trained up by spiritual teaching and examples, under the blessing of the Holy Spirit, by whom they have been regenerated, they are never to know of a time when they were not included in the promises of Christ. Instead of being driven forth as aliens, to run wild in the world, as are children of many so-called Christian sects, having no part nor lot in the blessed shelter and inheritance of Christ's Church, they are always to be folded within its tender security. The Church comes forward in the person of the child's Catholic parents—the divinely and natural appointed guardians of these young souls—and presses them to her own gracious bosom and feeds them on her own heavenly truth.

Consider for a moment the place and the meaning of Baptism. Its fundamental necessity in the religion Christ came on earth to found is sufficiently attested throughout the New Testament. The Saviour himself, notwithstanding His divine nature, submitted himself to it, "that he might fulfil all justice." So early in His ministry as His conversation with Nicodemus,

while He was announcing the grand principles of His new kingdom, He spoke of the new birth as requiring both the Holy Spirit and water: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven." He enjoins its universal observance through the Church in all nations and in all ages, in His last charge to His disciples. "Going, therefore, baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and, in addition, He insists on the necessity of Baptism. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." The object of this Sacrament is no less clear throughout the rest of the New Testament. Those whom St. Peter converted on Pentecost were first baptized. Those to whom the same Apostle was preaching in the house of Cornelius received Baptism after the Spirit of God had descended upon them. St. Paul, after his conversion, spent three days of fasting and prayer, his penitent heart poured out like water before God, but neither fasting nor prayer nor spiritual agony had cleansed him of his sins; there was necessary for his justification, the reception of this Sacrament. At the words of Ananias, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sin," he rose up and received the cleansing stream. Wherever the Apostle taught, through Macedonia, through Greece, through Asia Minor, his progress is marked by his Baptisms. "Teach and baptize," had been the Saviour's injunction. He that believeth and is baptized, and he only, shall be saved. It was ever and always the outward sign of that single fact—the beginning of the life in Christ, the new birth. It was applied to adults and children indiscriminately; for we read of whole households baptized. Whenever any person was converted, young or old, he was baptized, and that was the sole ceremony of admission to the Church.

In the case of Baptism of children of Catholic parents, it is the outward sign, and consecrating seal, that the children who receive it follow the organic law of their parents, and belong wholly and entirely to Christ and His Church. The Church comes forward and stretches out her arms with holy sprinkling to claim and bless the new-born immortal. The parents and

the sponsors engage, for the offspring, the blessings of the same covenant that covers themselves. Parental love, if it be Christian and Catholic, can not do less. To neglect, or to seriously delay, would really be worse than the unnaturalness of disowning the child; for in the latter case they are only turned out of the earthly home; in the former, out of God's spiritual home and denied the saving nurture of the Christian family.

THE SPONSORS OF BAPTISM

We now come to consider the sponsors in Baptism. Sponsors are they who present us to the Church for Baptism, who make answer when it is a child that is to be baptized, and who become sureties for the performance of those promises made in the child's name. To them belongs the obligation also of instructing the child in its Christian duties.

The selection of sponsors, the relation they enter into to the person baptized, and the duties they contract, are not sufficiently considered nowadays, and a few words of instruction in this regard will not be amiss. The sponsors, since they are to exercise vigilance over their spiritual children and try to form them in the spiritual life, should of necessity be exemplary Christians themselves. The parent who selects as godfather or godmother one whose life is at variance with the teachings of the Church is neglecting a sacred duty. Since they stand as spiritual parents to the child, it follows that mere children, those under twelve or fourteen years of age, should not act as sponsors. It is a rule that at least one of the godparents should have reached that age and should have been confirmed. Sponsors should understand clearly that they enter into spiritual relationship with the child, so that marriage between godparent and godchild would be null unless a dispensation were obtained. No impediment exists between the godfather and godmother. The duties of the god-parents are to see that the child is enabled to keep its baptismal promises; that is, have sufficient knowledge of its religion and the necessary moral support to follow a Christian life. However, these duties are never assumed unless the child's parents through death or by reason of moral unfitness cannot perform their obligations to the child.

There is a tendency to make the choice of god-parents a mere social compliment, having as much spiritual significance as an invitation to dinner. This is due to a lack of consciousness of the spiritual obligation entailed. Consider that the parent is establishing a real relationship between the soul of the child and the god-parents; that they stand in the presence of the Most High and present the infant to its God; that, in the name of the child, they voice the most solemn promises known to man, and obligate themselves to enable the child to fulfil those promises; that the sponsors are to take the newborn soul and lead it into the splendor and the glory of Christ's kingdom; and when you have considered these great realities, ask yourself if you will degrade that relationship to the level of a social call. The character of the sponsors should be a vital issue, and it will be to all those who view this Sacrament with the eyes of a living faith.

THE MINISTERS OF BAPTISM

Let us glance briefly at the question of lay Baptism. The bishop and the priest are the ordinary ministers of the Sacrament of Baptism; an extraordinary minister is the deacon; but in case of necessity any man or woman may baptize, even the father or the mother of the child, though this should not be done save when no one else can be had. The ceremony is simplicity itself. Let the one who is to baptize take natural water, that is, such as comes from the faucet, from the well, from the sea, or rain water; let him pour it upon the head and say while pouring, "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," taking care that the water touches the skin, and does not merely flow off the hair. If it be impossible to wet or wash the head of the one to be baptized, you may put the water on the arm, breast, or foot, or upon any part of the body that is naked. Mark, too, that the same person who pours the water must pronounce the words and must intend to do what the Church does.

Even if a child is supposed to be dead, yet one is not certain of it, it is well to baptize it conditionally, saying, "If thou art

living, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

This simple ceremony is something every Catholic should fully understand, and to this end should consult a priest if he has any doubts of his ability to perform it.

As I have said, all, without distinction, may perform this rite, be he Jew or Gentile, saint or sinner. By virtue only of his humanity and through the power given by Christ, he may regenerate a soul with the waters of Baptism, and give it the crown of everlasting life.

The Catholic laity should understand their duty on this point, and I repeat, whatever doubts are in their minds as to how they should act, must be cleared up by consulting proper authorities. The ceremony is so simple that all should know it. The consequences of omitting it are so great that we should tremble lest, through our neglect, they be visited upon us. The fate of an immortal soul is at stake, a soul for which the eternal Son of God laid down His life. Let assurance be made doubly sure by engaging Catholic doctors in time of childbirth. Who can tell what accident at a most critical moment may cause the absence of one who in certain unforeseen circumstances may know how to administer the Sacrament? Who can say that the nurse or the friend can or will baptize the child in cases where a good Catholic doctor will not fail to do his duty?

EXHORTATION

What value do they set upon the Sacrament who put off the Baptism of their children for months, and even for years? Do they really understand the significance of the Sacrament? Do they believe that Christ was in earnest when He said, "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven"? Why do they endanger the eternal welfare of their children? If the child is to be called away soon, is it going as a spotless angel into the presence of the Most High, there to make intercession for its parents and win for them strength in life's combat and cour-

age in life's sorrow? Or is it to be eternally separated from its God, and ever turn reproachful eyes on the parents who caused its exile?

Parents, have your children baptized in time. Bring the newborn soul to be cleansed at that torrent which flows from the smitten rock which is Christ. Let it be the child of your redeemed soul as well as your bodies, and make its eternal union with you in the presence of your God your care, as well as you do its temporal well-being.

And in the Baptism of each babe that we witness, let us recall our own Baptism and its sacred obligations. The soul that has been sealed and signed with Christ's stamp in Baptism can never be as if it were not baptized. For weal or wo, its sacred character is eternal. How this thought should lift us above the petty claims of our every-day life! The thought of the white garment placed upon us in Baptism will help preserve the delicate blush of spiritual modesty, the surest safeguard against temptation to things that are gross and low. The memory of our solemn pledge, to renounce Satan and all his works and pomps, will be a stimulus, enabling us to break with sin and the habits sin has clothed us with. If our temptations seem stronger than we can bear, and life's cross is heavy on our shoulders, a thought of the strengthening oil with which those shoulders were signed will lighten the burden and steel the vigor of our soul against the tempter's power. And the signet of the Crucified upon our heads is the sacred promise of the Saviour that we are His own, "bought at a great price," and that we, together with every soul that bears that sign, have a right to enter with Christ into His kingdom.

References

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SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

DISPOSITIONS FOR HOLY COMMUNION

TEXT

A certain man made a great supper, and invited many. And he sent his servant at the hour of supper to say to them that were invited, that they should come, for now all things are ready.—LUKE xiv. 16, 17.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. In the great supper spoken of in to-day's Gospel spiritual writers see an indirect reference to the Eucharistic banquet. It is our Lord's ardent desire that all Christians should approach and partake of this holy feast, and to this end He sends out His servants, the ministers of His Church, to invite them to come. Many, alas, do not heed the invitation, distracted as they are by the vanities of life, engrossed in human affairs, and carried away by the pleasures of sense. And yet the conditions which our Lord requires in order to partake of this sacred banquet are not inconsistent with any of our lawful occupations, nor beyond the reach of any of us. The many excuses alleged by people for remaining away from Holy Communion are mostly grounded on a misconception of the conditions really necessary and sufficient. What these conditions are we shall now proceed to consider.

I. **Preparation is necessary for Communion.** 1. Before our Lord gave Communion to His disciples He washed their feet, to show that the sacred mysteries should be received with cleanness of soul. 2. While Holy Communion is life to the good, it is death to the bad.

II. **Preparation of soul for Holy Communion.** 1. Two conditions are required for fruitful Communion: (a) the

state of grace; (b) a right intention. Hence if a person's conscience is burdened with enmity towards his neighbor, or any other mortal sin, he must not receive Communion until his sin has been blotted out by a worthy confession. The right intention consists in this that he who approaches the holy table should do so, not out of routine, or vain glory, or human respect, but to please God, to be more closely united to Him through charity, and to avail himself of this divine remedy for his weaknesses and failings. It is expedient, but not necessary, that the communicant be free from all affection to venial sins. 2. Holy Communion should be preceded by a serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, because the fruit of Communion is according to the dispositions of the recipient. One's preparation and thanksgiving should be in proportion to one's health, strength, duties, and circumstances. The preparation should consist chiefly in acts of faith, humility, desire and love. The thanksgiving should embrace principally acts of adoration and gratitude, as well as petitions in favor of ourselves and others.

III. **Preparation of body for Holy Communion.** 1. The law of the Church, which goes back almost to the time of the Apostles, requires that all who receive Communion should be fasting from midnight; that is, that nothing be swallowed in the way of food, drink or medicine. This law binds under pain of grave sin, and is intended to safeguard the reverence due the Blessed Sacrament. 2. Exceptions to this law of fasting: (a) those who receive Communion as *Viaticum;* (b) the sick who have been confined to their house for a month, without hope of speedy convalescence, who may with the confessor's permission receive Communion once or twice a week after having taken medicine or liquid refreshment. 3. Persons going to Holy Communion should be decently and modestly attired.

Exhortation. The faithful should receive Communion frequently, should prepare themselves fervently for it, and make suitable thanksgiving after it.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

Preparation for Communion

necessity of previous preparation

We now come to point out the manner in which the faithful should be previously prepared for sacramental Communion. To demonstrate the necessity of this previous preparation, the example of the Saviour is to be proposed to the faithful. Before He gave to His Apostles the Sacrament of His body and blood, although they were already clean, He washed their feet to show that we must use extreme diligence before Holy Communion in order to approach it with the greatest purity and innocence of soul.

In the next place, the faithful are to understand that as he who approaches thus prepared and disposed is adorned with the most ample gifts of heavenly grace, so on the contrary, he who approaches without this preparation not only derives from it no advantage, but even incurs the greatest misfortune and loss. It is characteristic of the best and most salutary things that, if seasonably made use of, they are productive of the greatest benefit, but if employed out of time, they prove most pernicious and destructive. It cannot, therefore, excite our surprise that the great and exalted gifts of God, when received into a soul properly disposed, are of the greatest assistance towards the attainment of salvation; while to those who receive them without these necessary dispositions, they bring with them eternal death. Of this the Ark of the Lord affords a convincing illustration. The people of Israel possessed nothing more precious, and it was to them the source of innumerable blessings from God; but when the Philistines carried it away, it brought on them a most destructive plague and the heaviest calamities, together with eternal disgrace.[1] Thus also food when received into a healthy stomach nourishes

[1] 1 Kings v. toto.

and supports the body; but the same food when received into a stomach indisposed, causes grave disorders.[2]

PREPARATION OF SOUL

The first preparation, then, which the faithful should make, is to distinguish table from table, this sacred table from profane tables,[3] this celestial bread from common bread. This we do when we firmly believe that the Eucharist really and truly contains the Body and Blood of the Lord, of Him whom the angels adore in heaven, "at whose nod the pillars of heaven fear and tremble," [4] of whose glory the heavens and the earth are full.[5] This is to discern the body of the Lord in accordance with the admonition of the Apostle,[6] venerating rather the greatness of the mystery, than too curiously investigating its truth by idle inquiry.

Another very necessary preparation is to ask ourselves if we are at peace with and sincerely love our neighbor. "If, therefore, thou offerest thy gift at the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother, and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." [7]

We should in the next place, carefully examine our consciences, lest perhaps they be defiled by mortal sin which has to be blotted out before Communion by contrition and confession. The Council of Trent has defined that no one conscious of mortal sin and having an opportunity of going to confession, however contrite he may deem himself, is to approach the Holy Eucharist until he has been purified by sacramental confession.[8]

[2] On the preparation for Communion see C. of Trent, sess. 13. c. 7, can. 11; Basil., q. 172. regul. brev.; serm. 2. de bapt.; Cyprian, de Lapsis; Aug., serm. i. de Temp.; Chrys., hom. 44, 45, 46, in Joan.; hom. 83.

[3] 1 Cor. x. 21.

[4] Job xxvi. 11.

[5] Isa. vi. 3.

[6] 1 Cor. xi. 29.

[7] Matt. v. 24, 25.

[8] Sess. 13. can. 11; Chrys., hom. 30 in Genes.; 20. in Matt.; Cypr., in lib. de Lapsis.

We should also reflect in the silence of our own hearts how unworthy we are that God should bestow on us this divine gift, and with the Centurion, of whom our Lord declared that he found not "so great faith in Israel," we should exclaim from our hearts: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof." [9]

We should also put the question to ourselves, whether we can truly say with Peter: "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," [10] and should recollect that he who sat down at the marriage feast without a wedding garment was cast into exterior darkness and condemned to eternal torments.[11]

PREPARATION OF BODY

Our preparation should not, however, be confined to the soul; it should also extend to the body. We are to approach the Holy Eucharist fasting, having neither eaten nor drunk anything, at least from the preceding midnight.[12]

The dignity of so great a Sacrament also demands that married persons abstain from the marriage debt for some days previous to Communion, an observance recommended by the example of David, who, when about to receive the show-bread from the hands of the priest, declared that he and his servants had been "clean from women for three days." [13]

The above are the principal things to be observed by the faithful preparatory to receiving the sacred mysteries with profit; and to these heads may be reduced whatever other preparations piety will suggest to the devout communicant.[14]

[9] Matt. viii. 8, 10.
[10] John xxi. 15.
[11] Matt. xxii. 12, 13.
[12] Aug., epist. 118. c. 6; lib. 1. ad inquis. Januarii c. 6.
[13] 1 Kings xxi. 3, 4, 5.
[14] Greg., in responsione 10. ad interrog. Aug.; quoted in 33 q. 4, c. 7; Aug., serm. 2. de temp.; 244.

Sermons

Preparation for Holy Communion

BY THE REV. J. A. MCHUGH, O.P.

NECESSITY OF PREPARATION

All that bread and wine do for the body is done by Holy Communion for the well being and delight of the soul, and that in a better and more perfect manner. The Lord, indeed, is not changed into our substance as are bread and wine, but we in a certain way are changed into Him; hence, St. Augustine represents our Lord as saying: "I am the food of the strong; grow and thou shalt receive me; and thou shalt not change me unto thyself, as with the food of thy body, but thou shalt be changed into me."

Just as the food and drink of the body nourishes, because it sustains, increases, repairs and refreshes, so does Holy Communion by transforming us into the likeness of Christ work in us analogous spiritual effects. By it is removed the infirmity induced by venial sin, the life of the soul is strengthened through an increase of the virtue of charity, actual fervor and devotion are inflamed, and a preservative is given against the danger of spiritual death.

It may seem wonderful, then, that while the power of the Holy Eucharist is so great and so far reaching, there are many Christians who appear to derive little or no profit from this Sacrament; nay, that many persons will say that they were better on the day of their First Communion than long years afterward when they had received the Sacrament hundreds of times. In considering this difficulty we must remember, first of all, that very often it is God alone who can judge whether we have improved or gone backwards; that the age of childhood does not experience the same difficulties and temptations as later years. But even when all these allowances are made, the undeniable fact still remains that many persons are benefited very little by Holy Communion. The explanation,

though, is not hard to find. No one would expect that a certain food, just because it contained excellent nutritive elements, would be of equal benefit to everyone that ate it. A great deal would depend on the physical condition of those who partook of it, their state of health, appetite, digestion, etc. To a diseased palate bread is distasteful, which is sweet to a healthy palate; to weak eyes light is irritating, which is delightful to eyes that are strong. It should not excite surprise, therefore, that the same Eucharist which is life to the good should be death to the unworthy, nor that its effects should be so infinitely varied even in the good. We must remember that the Sacraments, like natural causes, operate with greater or less vigor according to the fitness of the material upon which they must work. Fire burns much less readily with green than with dry wood. If, then, Holy Communion produces but little fruit, this must be ascribed not to a want of power in the Sacrament, but to a lack of co-operation in the communicant. The measure of benefit we derive from our Communions depends to a large extent on our own efforts and exertions. Let us consider what dispositions are required of us that we may receive not only the Sacrament, but also the plenteous outpouring of grace of which our Lord intended it to be the source.

THE SUFFICIENT AND ESSENTIAL PREPARATION

First of all in order to receive the holy mysteries with advantage, it is necessary to be in the *state of grace.* Natural food can be of no use to a person who is already dead; and in like manner Holy Communion can avail nothing to one who is dead in mortal sin. St. Paul warning the Corinthians against the sacrificial banquets of the heathens, tells them that they cannot be partakers of the Table of the Lord and of the table of the devils (1 Cor. x. 21). The same warning words may be applied to every species of grave sin. The evil one seduced our first parents in the garden of Paradise by offering them the forbidden fruit. And ever since how many have been enticed to the table of devils by the evil pleasures and satisfactions offered them? But the wages of mortal sin are death, the

poisoning of the spiritual life of the soul, which in the eyes of God becomes a horrible and repulsive corpse. We cannot partake of the table of the Lord and of the table of devils. If, therefore, our conscience reproach us with mortal sin, we must not presume to receive Holy Communion until we have been raised from death to the life of grace by repentance. "Let a man prove himself," says St. Paul, "and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that chalice. For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh judgment to himself, not discerning the body of the Lord" (1 Cor. vi. 28, 29). This proving of one's self, as we learn from ecclesiastical tradition and the teaching of the Council of Trent, requires that he who is conscious of grievous sin must have recourse to sacramental confession, no matter how contrite he may consider himself, before he approaches the holy Table.

Communion received in the state of conscious mortal sin, instead of being a benefit, adds a terrible crime of sacrilege to the guilt of the soul. The unworthy communicant acts like Judas, who, after he had betrayed his Master, sat with Him at table and partook of the sacred banquet. Like the Jews who cried out "His blood be upon us," the sacrilegious communicant makes himself guilty of the blood that was given for his redemption. Learning, then, from the action of our Lord at the Last Supper, Who washed His disciples' feet before He gave them the Communion of His body and blood, we must never approach this august banquet except with consciences purified from every stain of grievous sin.

For frequent Communion nothing further is required except a *right intention.* This means that the person who approaches the holy Table should do so not out of routine, or vain glory or human respect, but for the purpose of pleasing God, of being more closely united to Him by charity, and of seeking this divine remedy for his weaknesses and defects.

If a person were to eat without any appetite, simply because the accustomed hour for the meal was at hand, or because he wished to please the company at table, the food far from benefiting him would prove an injury. Similarly, we ought not to frequent Communion merely out of custom, or because we

desire to please men. Much less is it lawful to communicate from a motive that is deliberately sinful, such as the wish to acquire a reputation for holiness; for thus an act of religion would be made the means to a bad end.

Frequent Holy Communion should be practised, then, with a good intention, that is out of a motive of pleasing God and of promoting our own spiritual welfare. It is the ardent desire of our Saviour that the faithful should partake of this sacred banquet and He not only invites but commands us to partake of it. Furthermore our reception of this Sacrament is an act of piety that gives honor to the divine Majesty. Our Lord willed that this Sacrament should be a memorial of His Passion. "As often as you shall eat this bread, and drink the chalice, you shall shew the death of the Lord until He come" (1 Cor. xi. 26). We may also receive Communion as a mark of our thanksgiving to the divine bounty for the blessings bestowed on us. The word "Eucharist," which signifies "thanksgiving," and the example of our Lord, who instituted this Sacrament after having given thanks, remind us that it is most suitable that in receiving Holy Communion we intend to testify to God our gratitude for all the good that He has rendered to us.

We should also desire to receive from the Eucharist that spiritual nourishment for which chiefly the Sacrament was instituted. Above all our Lord wishes by means of this saving banquet to communicate to our souls the effects of His Passion, a participation in the divine life through grace. Seconding this gracious purpose of Christ, let us long for the invigoration and restoration that this Sacrament affords, for that union with God and that strength to overcome sin which are the proper effects of the Eucharist; let us make our own the sentiments of the pious author of the Imitation of Christ: "Confiding, O Lord, in Thy goodness and great mercy, I come sick to my Saviour, hungry and thirsty to the Fountain of Life, needy to the King of Heaven, a servant to my Lord, a creature to my Creator, and one in desolation to my loving Comforter. To thee do I come for remedy, to Thee do I pray for consolation and relief."

These are the supernatural motives that constitute a right intention in receiving Holy Communion. By means of them we unite our intention with that divine intention which Jesus Christ formed when He instituted this Sacrament. This holy purpose should be present, at least implicitly, in our minds when we determine to approach Holy Communion. It is well, however, to form our intention with as much care and explicitness as possible; for thereby, as we shall see, the benefit of our Communion is much enhanced.

Here it may be noted that the desire to benefit a neighbor, living or dead, by offering our Communion for him is not a sufficient motive for approaching this Sacrament. In reality we cannot give the grace of our Communion to anyone else. One person cannot receive Communion for another any more than he can eat for another, any more than he can be baptized for another. Our Lord willed that we should receive this Sacrament for a need of our own spiritual lives, and we have neither the right nor the power to change this. In receiving the Eucharist we must intend what its Author intended. It is very laudable, however, to offer prayers at Communion for our neighbor; for the prayers said at that time are especially acceptable before God and especially powerful.

THE ADEQUATE AND SUITABLE PREPARATION

Thus far we have considered the indispensable disposition for a fruitful Communion. If we approach this Sacrament in the state of grace, we are sure to profit, for the Sacrament produces its grace unfailingly in such case. For frequent and daily Communion it is required that one be actually in the state of grace and have the right intention; and if we possess these dispositions we must not allow ourselves to be kept away from this Sacrament by attachment to venial sin, for we should thus deny ourselves the very remedy that will enable us to conquer venial sin.

But while we must avoid the extreme of that rigorism which required so many and such stringent conditions that hardly

any, and even they but seldom, could be deemed sufficiently prepared for Holy Communion, we must also beware of that other extreme of laxism which would regard all preparation as a matter of little or no moment. For it must be remembered that while the Sacraments of the New Law take effect through their own intrinsic power communicated to them by Christ, nevertheless they produce a greater effect in proportion as the dispositions of the recipient are better. Hence the Church, while urging the faithful to frequent Communion, reminds that care is to be taken that Holy Communion be preceded by serious preparation, and followed by a suitable thanksgiving, according to each one's strength, circumstances and duties.

Both preparation and thanksgiving are important; but if we inquire as to their relative importance, the preference must be given to the preparation. There are many, no doubt, who in practice follow an entirely different principle and center all their efforts on a devout thanksgiving after Communion to the greater or less neglect of the preparation. Perhaps some would even attempt to justify such a method by claiming that the presence of our Lord with us after Communion demands that we give more attention to those precious and fleeting moments than to the time before His coming. The mistake is that by giving greater importance to the thanksgiving, we prefer the grace that comes from our own efforts to the much superior and more assured grace which comes from the Sacrament. The sacramental grace we gain is proportioned to our disposition, and our disposition at the moment of Communion will depend on the coldness or fervor of our preparation. Moreover, since without a special grace the fervor of charity does not come to us suddenly, but results from previous preparatory acts, would it not be rash to expect that after an ordinary and mediocre preparation we should be filled with devotion at the moment of Communion? Since, then, the Blessed Eucharist is the most powerful and effective means of infusing into our souls the supernatural life, and since the measure of its effectiveness depends on the quality of the preparation we give to its reception, let us never neglect to excite within ourselves before Communion the greatest piety of soul of which we are

capable. It is thus that we shall profit to the utmost by the fruits of the Sacrament and that our thanksgiving and Communion prayers shall acquire an ever greater merit and value in the sight of God.

How much time should be given to the preparation and thanksgiving? Of what prayers or exercises should these acts of devotion be made up? To these questions only general answers can be given, since the circumstances and conditions of individual communicants are very different. All should make a serious preparation and a suitable thanksgiving. A quarter of an hour for the proximate preparation and an equal space of time for the thanksgiving seem sufficient under the average circumstances; but as was said, this is not a fixed and invariable rule, and in individual cases account must be taken of many factors, as health, duties, and the like.

As regards the prayers and exercises that should be used before and after Communion, the individual may follow his own pious inclinations. "Greater profit is derived from the prayer in which more devotion is felt," says Blessed Jordan of Saxony. A practice recommended by many writers as a remote preparation for Communion is the reading of solid spiritual books that discuss the doctrine of the Eucharist. As to the prayers that should be employed there is a rich treasury from which to choose—the many devout aspirations, hymns, acts in honor of the Eucharist, composed by the Saints and Doctors, which may be found in the collections and manuals of prayer approved by the Church. Or if one prefers, he may profitably make use of the ordinary prayers, of aspirations suggested by his own needs, or of fervent ejaculations. For devout reflections on the Eucharist and for acts of preparation and thanksgiving nothing more excellent can be recommended than the Fourth Book of the Imitation of Christ.

A few words may now be said concerning the chief acts of virtue that are important in preparing for Communion. How much our Lord desired that *peace* and *charity* should reign in the hearts of the communicants we may infer from the fact that it was at the Last Supper, just before He instituted and administered this Sacrament, that He gave to His disciples the new com-

mandment that they should love one another as He had loved them. The early Christians of Jerusalem were models in observing this command, for we read all the multitude of the believers had but one heart and one soul, and all were persevering daily in prayer and in the breaking of bread. Mindful, then, of the meekness of Christ Whom we are to receive, and of the unity and charity which this Sacrament symbolizes, let us come to Communion with hearts free from jealousy and dislikes, praying God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us and asking the Lamb of God to grant us peace.

Reverence and *humility* are likewise very important in our preparation for Communion. For we come to Christ as weak and infirm to the Physician of life, as defiled to the Fountain of Mercy, as blind to the Light of Eternal Brightness, as poor and needy to the Lord of heaven and earth. Well does it become us, then, when approaching this august Sacrament to imitate the example of the Centurion, and, filled with the persuasion of our own unworthiness and of the greatness of Him who comes to us, to say to Christ: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof."

Though freedom from mortal sin suffices to make one disposed for worthy Communion, it is expedient that an even greater *purity* of conscience be sought and that the communicant strive to free himself from venial sins, especially from such as are fully deliberate and from any affection to them. While the Confiteor is said and the general absolution given before Communion we ought with contrition of soul to implore the pardon of our faults and offenses.

Not less important than the previous qualities is a lively *faith*. This Sacrament is the "Mystery of Faith." On the cross the divinity of Christ was concealed; in the Eucharist even His humanity is hidden. But with the same confidence as that which animated the penitent thief let us approach our Lord that we may prepare ourselves for life eternal. Unlike the Apostle Thomas we do not perceive the wounded hands and feet and side; but when the priest raises the sacred host and says: "Behold the Lamb of God," we can with the eyes of faith behold our Saviour and say with Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

The chief disposition we should strive to excite within our souls before Communion is *devotion*. If we desire an example of the fervor with which we should long for Holy Communion, let us recall how so many Kings and Patriarchs of old sighed for the coming of Christ: "Oh that the heavens would send down dew and the clouds rain forth the Just One." The Blessed Imelda Lambertini longed so earnestly for Holy Communion that the sacred host came to her miraculously.

The thanksgiving after Communion, though less important than the preparation, should not be neglected. Ingratitude is rightly considered by all as most hateful, and nothing wounds a kindly heart so much as to see favors and benefits coldly received or disregarded. Yet there is nothing more common than ingratitude towards God. Even many who pray earnestly, think seldom or never of thanking God for the answers to their prayers. But at no time is want of thankfulness more shocking than after Communion. The greatness of the benefit received in Communion is such that no other grace given us can be compared to it. Let us not, then, hurry from this heavenly banquet without a word of recognition; but filled with admiration at the divine bounty, let us praise and magnify the goodness of God and thank Him for all the blessings He has conferred on us.

Although the preparation and thanksgiving of which we have been speaking are not essential to a worthy Communion, and although the Sacrament can produce its effects without them, we have insisted on their importance because it is owing to their neglect that so many Communions produce but little fruit. Want of reverence, devotion and other qualities provided it is not grievously sinful, does not, it is true, destroy the Sacramental effect but it greatly diminishes the benefit the communicant would otherwise receive. Our Lord is prevented, so to speak, by our coldness and unpreparedness from conferring the generous measure of grace He comes to give. As was said of Nazareth: "He could not do any miracles there" (Mark vi. 5), "because of their unbelief" (Matt. xiii. 58).

PREPARATION OF BODY

Thus far we have spoken of the dispositions and preparation of soul that are required in the communicant. There is also a disposition of body that is needful.

First of all the communicant should be *fasting from midnight.* This law of the Church, which obliges under grave sin, requires that nothing in the nature of food or drink be taken before Communion. It is a most ancient law, and St. Augustine traces it back to the ordinance of the Apostles themselves. The reasons which induced the Church to make this regulation were according to St. Thomas: first, that the Blessed Eucharist may be received into a mouth not contaminated by any food or drink; secondly, to give us to understand that the food of the soul should be preferred to that of the body; thirdly, to prevent irreverence to the Blessed Sacrament that might arise from over indulgence in food or drink. From this rule of the Eucharistic fast are excused the dying, who are receiving Communion as a provision for their journey into eternity. Likewise the Church makes certain exemptions in favor of the sick who are not in danger of death. Invalids who have been ill for a month and whose speedy convalescence is doubtful may, upon the advice of their confessors, receive Communion once or twice weekly, even though they should previously have taken medicine or liquid refreshment. The Church makes this concession in favor of the sick because of her earnest wish that the practice of frequent Communion be encouraged. There are many chronic invalids who long for the strength and comfort that is derived from holy Communion, but who are not able to keep the prescribed fast in its entirety. For these, therefore, the law is relaxed lest they be deprived of this most plenteous source of grace.

Though God beholds the interior dispositions of the soul, yet the respect and devotion that we feel in approaching Communion should be *manifested outwardly* in our attire and demeanor. Moses was bidden to put off the shoes from his feet as a mark of reverence for the divine Presence that spoke to him from the burning bush. The guest who appeared at the nuptial banquet

without the ceremonial dress was severely punished by the King. How unbecoming and scandalous would it be to approach the presence of Christ, to come to the table of the Lord, with an external carelessness and slovenliness that one would carefully avoid in visiting a friend? Much more out of place at the Communion rail are extravagant display, a garb that is unbecoming to the house of God, levity of manner. Cleanliness, neatness and modesty in appearance can be practiced by all, even by those whose worldly means are most limited; and if this is done, it is enough.

RESOLUTIONS

There is no other means placed within our reach by Almighty God which so powerfully aids us in applying to our souls the merits of Christ's Passion and of attaining salvation as the Blessed Eucharist. Let it not be said of us, therefore, that like the invited guests of the parable we refuse to appreciate or make use of the bounty that is offered us. As we have seen, the conditions necessary for a worthy Communion are not many nor difficult. We do not go to Communion because we are holy, but that we may become holy. If we really wish, then, to lead a good life, we shall go to Communion *as often as possible,* knowing that there is nothing else that so much helps us to practice virtue and avoid sin. Remember the words said by the King of those who refused his hospitality: "I say to you that none of these men shall taste of my supper." Is there not reason to fear that if we neglect the Eucharist in this life, we shall be excluded from the eternal festivity of heaven?

Let us resolve not only that our Communions shall be frequent, but also that they shall be *fervent.* It is a saying of St. Augustine that those things to which we are accustomed grow cheap in our eyes. Familiarity breeds contempt. The Israelites in the desert came after a time to despise and loathe the heavenly manna which God sent them every day. We shall avoid the danger of receiving Holy Communion out of mere custom and shall at the same time derive ever greater fruits of holiness from its participation, if we are conscientiously faithful to the practice of preparation and

thanksgiving. To use the words of St. John Chrysostom: "Let no one approach with disgust, no one with coldness; let all be on fire, fervent and aroused."

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THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE

TEXT

There shall be joy before the angels of God upon one sinner doing penance.—LUKE XV. 10.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. In the parable of this day's Gospel our Lord teaches us the beautiful and consoling truth that the "mercy of God is above all His works," as the Psalmist sings (Ps. cxliv. 9). The proud Pharisees, as we see, looked with hardness and disdain upon sinners; but our Lord made plain to them how different were His ways from theirs—how, like the good shepherd, He goes out in quest of the lost sheep, and by His grace gently draws them to repentance. Indeed, He declares that there is rejoicing in heaven before the angels of God upon the conversion of every sinner. All the merciful Father requires in His erring children is that they return to

Him with sincere and contrite hearts, doing penance for their sins.

I. **The meaning of penance.** 1. The word penance or repentance means: (a) sorrow for something, whether that something be good or bad; or (b) sorrow for having committed sin, but not because sin is an offence to God; or (c) sorrow for sin because of some supernatural motive. Only in its third meaning is penance a virtue, and it may be defined as an interior act by which the sinner turns to God, detests and grieves over his sins, and firmly resolves to commit them no more, in the hope of obtaining pardon. 2. Penance as a virtue differs from the Sacrament in two ways: (a) the former was always necessary for reconciliation with God, even before Christ. We have no example of the pardon of any unrepentant sinner. The Sacrament of Penance became necessary only after its institution by Christ. (b) The virtue of penance is only an internal act; whereas the Sacrament of Penance, in addition to this internal act, requires also the external acts of the penitent and the absolution of the priest. Since its institution the Sacrament of Penance by divine ordinance is essential, at least in desire, for the forgiveness of grave sins committed after Baptism.

II. **Penance is a virtue.** 1. This is proved by the fact that God has commanded penance (Matt. iv. 17; Luke xiii. 3), and God can command only that which is good. 2. Another proof that penance is a virtue is found in this that it duly regulates sorrow, both with regard to the object and the measure of sorrow. 3. The motives of true repentance show that penance is a virtue; these motives are to turn from sin, to make compensation to God, and to recover His grace. 4. The virtue of penance, or conversion, is approached by various preparatory acts: faith, fear of punishment, hope of pardon, and fear of offending God's majesty. 5. The virtue of penance leads to life everlasting.

Exhortation. 1. God will not forgive any sin, whether it be

grave or light, without sincere repentance. Hence the virtue of penance is as necessary now as it ever was. Neither the waters of Baptism, nor the absolution of the priest will remove the sins of an unrepentant sinner. 2. The virtue of penance will not suffice without the Sacrament, at least in desire. The Fathers have called the Sacrament of Penance the "second plank after shipwreck." 3. When going to confession the faithful should have in mind principally their own interior dispositions of heart and soul, lest the use of the Sacrament become a mere formality. 4. Do not put off repentance, but go to confession as soon as possible. Make frequent acts of contrition, especially before retiring at night.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

The Virtue of Penance

Necessity of the Sacrament of Penance

As the frailty and weakness of human nature are universally known and felt by each one in himself, no one can be ignorant of the great necessity of the Sacrament of Penance. If, therefore, the diligence of the pastor in instructing his people should be proportioned to the weight and importance of the subject, we must come to the conclusion that in expounding this Sacrament he can never be sufficiently diligent. It should be explained with more care than Baptism. Baptism is administered but once, and cannot be repeated; Penance may be administered and becomes necessary, as often as we may have sinned after Baptism. Hence the Council of Trent declares: "For those who fall into sin after Baptism the Sacrament of Penance is as necessary to salvation as is Baptism for those who have not been already baptized."[1] The saying of St. Jerome that Penance is "a secon' plank,"[2] is universally known and highly commended by all subsequent writers on sacred

[1] Sess. 6. de Just. cap. 14; Sess. 14. de pœnit. cap. 3.
[2] In 3 c. Isa. on the words Ruit Hierusalem, epistola 8.

things. As he who suffers shipwreck has no hope of safety, unless perchance he seize on some plank from the wreck, so he that suffers the shipwreck of baptismal innocence, unless he cling to the saving plank of Penance, has abandoned all hope of salvation.

These instructions are intended not only for the benefit of the pastor, but also for that of the faithful at large, to awaken attention, lest they be found culpably negligent in a matter so very important. Impressed with a just sense of the frailty of human nature, their first and most earnest desire should be to advance with the divine assistance in the ways of God, without sin or failing. But should they at any time prove so unfortunate as to fall, then, looking at the infinite goodness of God, who like the good shepherd binds up and heals the wounds of His sheep, they should not postpone recourse to the saving remedy of Penance.[3]

DIFFERENT MEANINGS OF THE WORD PENANCE

To enter at once on the subject, and to avoid all error to which the ambiguity of the word may give rise, its different meanings are first to be explained. By penance some understand satisfaction; while others, who wander far from the doctrine of the Catholic faith, supposing penance to have no reference to the past, define it to be nothing more than newness of life. It must, therefore, be shown that the word has a variety of meanings.

In the first place, it is said of those to whom that which was before pleasing is now displeasing, whether the object itself was good or bad. In this sense all those repent whose sorrow is according to the world, not according to God; and therefore, worketh not salvation, but death.[4]

[3] Ezech. xxxiv. 16. The following Fathers have written on Penance: Tertul., one book; Cypr., several letters and the book De Lapsis; Pacian, one book, two letters to Simpronian, the work De Pœnit. et Conf. seu Parœn. ad Pœnit.; Ambr., two books; Chrys., ten homilies and sermon de Pœnit.; Ephrem.; Fulgentius, l. 2. de Remissione Pecc. ad Euth.; Greg. Nyss., orat. de Pœnit.; Basil, one homily; Aug., l. de Vera et falsa Pœnit. and the admirable book De Pœnit. Medicina; Marcus Eremita, one book De Pœnit. (to be read with caution). Concerning him see Bellarm. de Script. Eccl. See Decr. of Grat., de Pœnit., 7 dist.

[4] 2 Cor. vii. 10.

In the second place, it is used to express that sorrow which the sinner conceives, not however for the sake of God, but for his own sake concerning some sin in which he once took pleasure.

A third kind of penance is that by which we experience interior sorrow of heart, or give exterior indication of such sorrow for the sake of God alone. To all these sorts of sorrow the word repentance properly applies.

When the Sacred Scriptures say that God repented,[5] the expression is evidently figurative. When we repent of any thing, we are anxious to change it; and hence when God has resolved to change any thing, the Scriptures, accommodating their language to our manner of speaking, say that He repents. Thus we read that "it repented him that he had made man,"[6] and also that He was sorry that He had made Saul king.[7]

But an important distinction is to be made between these different significations of the word. The first kind of penance must be considered faulty; the second is only the agitation of a disturbed mind; the third we call both a virtue and a Sacrament. In this last sense penance is taken here.

DEFINITION OF THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE

We shall first treat of penance as a virtue, not only because it is the duty of the pastor to lead the faithful to the practice of every virtue; but also, because the acts which proceed from penance as a virtue, constitute the matter, as it were, of Penance as a Sacrament, and unless the virtue be rightly understood, the power of the Sacrament cannot be appreciated.

The faithful, therefore, are first to be admonished and exhorted to labor strenuously to attain this interior penance of the heart which we call a virtue, and without which exterior penance can avail them very little.[8] This virtue consists in turning to God sincerely and from the heart, and in hating

[5] Gen. vi. 6; 1 Kings xv. 11; Ps. cv. 45; Jer. xxvi. 3.
[6] Gen. vi. 6.
[7] 1 Kings xv. 11.
[8] Amb., sermo. de pœn., quoted in de pœnit. dist. 3. cap. pœnitentia; Aug., lib. de vera et falsa pœn. c. 8, quoted in de pœn. 3. c. 4; Greg., hom. 34. in Evang.; lib. 9. Regist. Epist. 39.

and detesting our past transgressions, with a firm resolution of amendment of life, hoping to obtain pardon through the mercy of God. Accompanying this penance, like an inseparable companion of detestation of sin, is a sorrow and sadness, which is a certain agitation and disturbance of the soul, and is called by many a passion. Hence many of the Fathers define penance as an anguish of soul.

Penance must, however, be preceded by faith, for without faith no man can turn to God. Faith, therefore, cannot on any account be called a part of penance.[9]

PENANCE PROVED TO BE A VIRTUE

That this inward penance is, as we have already said, a virtue, the various commands which have been given regarding it clearly show; for the law commands only those actions that are virtuous.

Furthermore, no one can deny that it is a virtue to be sorrowful at the time, in the manner, and to the extent which are required by reason and religion. To regulate sorrow in this manner belongs to the virtue of penance. Some conceive a sorrow which bears no proportion to the enormity of their crimes. Nay, "there are some," says Solomon, "who are glad when they have done evil."[10] Others, on the contrary, give themselves to such morbid melancholy and to such a deluge of grief, as utterly to abandon all hope of salvation. Such perhaps was the condition of Cain when he exclaimed: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon."[11] Such certainly was the condition of Judas, who, "repenting," hanged himself in despair, and thus sacrificed soul and body.[12] Penance, therefore, considered as a virtue, assists us in restraining within the bounds of moderation our sense of sorrow.

That penance is a virtue may also be inferred from the ends which the penitent proposes to himself. The first is to destroy sin and efface from the soul its every spot and stain. The sec-

[9] Trid. Sess. 14. de pœn. c. 3, can. 4.
[10] Prov. ii. 14.
[11] Gen. iv. 13.
[12] Matt. xxvii. 3.

ond is to make satisfaction to God for the sins which he has committed, which is clearly an act of justice towards God. Between God and man, it is true, no relation of strict justice can exist, so great is the distance between the Creator and the creature; yet between them there is evidently a sort of justice, such as exists between a father and his children, between a master and his servants. The third end of the penitent is to reinstate himself in the favor and friendship of God whom he has offended and whose hatred he has earned by the turpitude of sin. That penance is a virtue the foregoing considerations sufficiently prove.

THE DEGREES BY WHICH WE ATTAIN THIS VIRTUE

We must also point out the steps, by which we may ascend to this divine virtue. The mercy of God first goes before us and converts our hearts to him. This was the object of the prophet's prayer: "Convert us, O Lord! and we shall be converted." [13] Illumined by this celestial light the soul next tends to God by faith. "He that cometh to God," says the Apostle, "must believe that he is, and is a rewarder to them that seek him." [14] A salutary fear of God's judgments follows, and the soul, contemplating the punishments that await sin, is recalled from the paths of vice. To this state of soul seem to refer these words of Isaias: "As a woman with child, when she draweth near the time of her delivery, is in pain and crieth out in her pangs, so are we become." Then follows a hope of obtaining mercy from God, encouraged by which we resolve on improvement of life. Lastly, our hearts are inflamed by charity, whence springs that filial fear which good and dutiful children experience; and thus, dreading only to offend the majesty of God in any thing, we entirely abandon the ways of sin.

HEAVEN THE REWARD OF PENANCE

Such are, as it were, the steps by which we ascend to this most exalted virtue, a virtue altogether heavenly and divine,

[13] Jerem. xxxi. 18.
[14] Heb. xi. 6.

to which the Sacred Scriptures promise the inheritance of heaven. "Do penance," says the Redeemer, "for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." [15] "If," says the prophet Ezechiel, "the wicked do penance for all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all my commandments, and do judgment and justice, living he shall live, and shall not die." [16] "I desire not, saith the Lord, the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live," [17] words which are evidently understood of eternal life.

Sermons

The Necessity of the Virtue of Penance

BY THE REV. FERDINAND HECKMANN, O.F.M.

MEANING OF THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE

What do we understand by the virtue of penance? Penance is a supernatural, moral virtue whereby the sinner is disposed to hatred of his sins as an offence against God, and to a firm purpose of amendment and of due satisfaction for them. The principal act in the exercise of this virtue, is the detestation of one's own sins. The motive of this detestation must be that sin offends God. To regret sin on account of the mental or physical suffering, the social loss or human punishment which it entails, is natural, and such a sorrow does not suffice for the exercise of the virtue of penance. On the other hand the resolve to amend, while certainly necessary, is not sufficient without hatred of sin, already committed, and due satisfaction for it by the performance of works of penance. Such a resolve would profess obedience to God's law in the future, but would disregard the claims of God's justice for past transgressions.

NECESSITY PROVED FROM OLD TESTAMENT

"Be converted, and do penance for all your iniquities," says the prophet. "Cast away from you all your transgressions, and

[15] Matt. iv. 17.
[16] Ezech. xviii. 21.
[17] Ezech. xxxiii. 11.

make yourselves a new heart, and a new spirit" (Ezech. xviii. 31). "Be converted to Me," says God through the mouth of his prophet Joel, "with all your heart, in fasting, and in weeping, and in mourning. And rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God: for he is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy, and ready to repent of evil" (Joel ii. 12, 13). And the prophet Jeremias says of God: "I attended, and hearkened; no man speaketh what is good, there is none that doeth penance for his sin, saying: What have I done? They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to the battle" (Jer. viii. 6).

TEACHING OF CHRIST

Our Divine Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, after fasting forty days and forty nights in the desert, and singly defeating Satan in his threefold temptation, began his missionary life with the same exhortation to penance as His precursor. "From that time," says the Evangelist of Him, "Jesus began to preach, and to say: Do penance, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand" (Matth. iv. 17). And how often did He not repeat the same exhortation in His Gospel of penance. Contempt of the world, self-denial, mortification of the spirit and flesh, and the Cross, are the quintessence of His teaching. "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matth. xvi. 24). In the parables of the Prodigal Son and of the Publican, He proclaims the same doctrine of the necessity of penance and repentance for sins committed, and He has held up for all coming ages Mary Magdalen, who "washed out her sins with her tears" of sorrow, as the true type of a repentant sinner. In the present order of Divine Providence, God Himself cannot, and will not forgive sin, if there be no real penance and repentance. In the Old Law eternal life is denied to the man who does iniquity. "But if a man turn himself away from his justice," says the prophet, "and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man useth to work, shall he live? all his justices which he hath done, shall not be remembered: in the prevarication, by

which he hath prevaricated, and in his sin which he hath committed, in them he shall die. And when the wicked turneth himself away from his wickedness, which he hath wrought, and doeth judgment, and justice, i.e., judgeth himself and doeth penance according to his guilt, he shall save his soul" (Ezech. xviii. 24, 27). And Christ but restates this doctrine of the Old Law, when He says: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 3). In the New Law, therefore, penance and repentance is as necessary as it was in the Old Law; a penance and repentance that includes reformation of life, grief for sin, and willingness to make satisfaction for it by works of penance.

Jesus Christ has confirmed His words by His example. Although holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and made higher than the heavens, He practiced the severest penance. From the Manger to the Cross, His Life was one of continual prayer and fasting, of privation, suffering and humiliation.

TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

When St. Peter, on the Day of Pentecost, preached to the multitude that had gathered about the house in which the Holy Ghost in the form of fiery tongues had descended upon the Apostles, he so moved them to repentance that when they had heard his words "they had compunction in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the Apostles: What shall we do, men and brethren? But Peter said to them: Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Act. Apost. ii. 37, 38). St. Paul, speaking to the Athenians, said: "And God, indeed, having winked at the times of this ignorance, now declareth unto men, that all should everywhere do penance, because He hath appointed a day, wherein He will judge the world in equity by the man whom He hath appointed; giving faith to all, by raising him up from the dead" (Act. Apost. xvii. 30, 31). The Apostles also practiced what they preached. St. Peter so bewailed his threefold denial of our Lord that from the constant flow of his tears furrows appeared upon his

cheeks, and St. Paul tells us that "in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils from his own nation, in perils from the Gentiles, in perils in the cities, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils from false brethren, in labor and painfulness, in much watching, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness," he did preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In another passage He says: "I do all things for the Gospel's sake: that I may be made partaker thereof. Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize? So run that you may obtain. And every one that striveth for the mastery, restraineth himself from all things: and they, indeed, that they may receive a corruptible crown, but we an incorruptible one. I therefore so run, not as at an uncertainty. I so fight, not as one beating the air; but I chastise my body and bring it into subjection: lest perhaps, when I have preached to others, I myself should become a castaway" (1 Cor. ix. 23-27).

Our holy Mother the Church teaches that all who wish to save their soul, must subdue and conquer their passions and inclinations to evil, and must lead an humble and mortified life; that he who has fallen into mortal sin, can cleanse himself from it only by bringing forth worthy fruits of penance. "For the sorrow which is according to God," says the Apostle, "worketh penance unto salvation which is lasting" (2 Cor. vii. 10). "Be patient, therefore, and be converted," St. Peter admonishes us, that your sins may be blotted out" (Act. Apost. iii. 19). This doctrine the Church has received from her Divine Founder, proclaimed in her councils, defended against heretics, taught in her schools, and from her pulpits, and applied in her confessionals, without penance, the Church, the pillar and foundation of truth tells us, there is and can be no salvation, but there remains only the expectation of eternal damnation.

MOTIVES FOR PRACTICING THE VIRTUE OF PENANCE

If then our faith is founded upon penance, and has always considered penance necessary for salvation, the practice of the virtue of penance cannot be a matter of choice with us,

left to our own discretion, but is a stern duty which we cannot shirk. Therefore, St. Augustine says that man, although not conscious of any sin, should not dare to depart from this life without having done penance.

We are born in sin and are liable to fall so easily into sin. One of the pernicious consequences of original sin is that it established the dominion of concupiscence in man, the domination of the law of the members which battles against the law of the mind. "The imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth," says Holy Writ. "Every man," says St. James, "is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin. But sin, when it is completed, begetteth death" (James i. 14, 15). This concupiscence is not sinful, but it entices and allures us into sin. Since man is weak, he often succumbs to temptation. For this reason sin is so frequently committed by man that, as the Scriptures tell us, all men, without exception, are sinners. "There is no man that sinneth not," says the wise man (III Reg. viii. 46). And again: "Who can say: My heart is clean, I am pure from sin?" (Prov. xx. 9). "For there is no just man upon earth, that doth good and sinneth not" (Eccles. vii. 21). "There is not any man just," says St. Paul. "All have turned out of the way; they are become unprofitable together: there is none that doeth good, there is not so much as one" (Rom. iii. 10, 12). "If we say," says St. John, "that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us" (I John i. 8). If we examine our past life, must we not truthfully say that we have sinned, that we have offended God by transgressing His commandments? Even those who lead a pure and holy life are not altogether free from sin. "For a just man shall fall seven times," says Holy Scripture (Prov. xxiv. 16). Every one of us must, therefore, confess with David: "I have sinned against the Lord" (II Kings xii. 13). "My iniquities are gone over my head: and as a heavy burden are heavy upon me" (Ps. xxxvii. 5).

For every sin, mortal or venial, we must make satisfaction to God. To understand the doctrine of satisfaction, we must

remember that every sin has two evil consequences, the guilt or stain which sin leaves on the soul, and the debt of punishment, i.e., the satisfaction which must be rendered to God in atonement for the outrage and insult offered to Him by sin. The guilt of sin is blotted out by sincere repentance in the Sacrament of Penance, or by an act of contrition, perfect or imperfect according as the sin is mortal or venial, if the Sacrament of Penance cannot be received. To the perfect contrition for mortal sin must in such a case necessarily be joined the desire of receiving the Sacrament of Penance. When God pardons the sin, He always remits the eternal punishment due to it, and at least a part of the temporal punishment. But God, after the sin has been forgiven, generally requires some temporal punishment or satisfaction for sin which either He Himself imposes upon man by sending him temporal afflictions, or which man must impose upon himself and which consists in voluntary acts of mortification and penance. We have examples of this in Holy Writ. Moses for the sin of diffidence which he committed in striking the rock twice, was punished by Almighty God, even after his sin had been forgiven, by not being allowed to enter into the Promised Land. Although God forgave the sin of our first parents in paradise, He nevertheless inflicted on them severe temporal punishments, and continues still to inflict them upon all His posterity. David's sin of vanity in numbering the people was punished, even after he repented, by the destruction of 70,000 of his subjects through a pestilence.

These examples of Holy Writ show that God does not pardon our sins, except on condition that we do penance for them. Hence the sinners of the Old Testament, when begging of God to pardon their sins, never asked to be entirely exempted from punishment, but only not to be chastised according to the full rigor of Divine Justice. "Rebuke me not, O Lord, in Thy indignation," said the royal prophet, "nor chastise me in Thy wrath," but he declared himself ready to do penance for his sins: "I am ready for scourges." "There is no doubt," says St. Eucherius, "that God pardons sin, when the sinner repents of it; but He does not leave it unpunished,

for either the sinner must punish himself or God will have to punish him. We satisfy, therefore, divine justice for sin committed, either by patiently bearing the crosses, trials and sufferings that God sends us, or by performing voluntary acts of mortification and penance in this life, else we will have to endure long and indescribable pains in purgatory. David had committed the grievous sins of murder and adultery. He repented of his sin with so much contrition that God sent the prophet Nathan to him with the message: "The Lord hath taken away thy sin, thou shalt not die. Nevertheless, because thou hast given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, for this thing, the child that is born to thee shall surely die. The sword shall not depart from thy house, because thou hast despised me" (2 Kings xii. 10, 13, 14). Such was the penance imposed on him by Almighty God, after his sin had been forgiven. But David was not satisfied with this penance and hence performed other penitential works. "I am ready for scourges," he says, "and my sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare my iniquity, and I will think of my sin" (Ps. xxxvii. 18, 19). "Every night I will wash my bed: I will water my couch with my tears" (Ps. vi. 7). His fasting was so severe that ashes were his food and tears of contrition his drink. "I did eat ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping" (Ps. ci. 10). To confess our sins, therefore, and to perform the light penance imposed upon us by the confessor is not sufficient to atone for the outrage and insult offered by sin to Almighty God, but voluntary acts of mortification and penance should justly follow the performance of the slight penance enjoined on us in the confessional. Unless we atone for our sins by self-imposed acts of penance in this world, we shall have to render involuntary satisfaction for them in the next world, in a prison out of which we shall not be delivered till we have paid the last farthing of our debt.

EXHORTATION

Let us, then, take the safer and easier part, and anticipate the Divine punishments by voluntary mortifications and pen-

ances. "What you have done," says St. Augustine, "cannot remain unpunished; and wherein a man has sinned, he shall also be chastised; so that you must either punish yourself, or God will punish you." Prudence teaches us to choose the lesser of these two evils. If you wish, therefore, to avoid the Divine chastisements, chastise yourselves in this world, for in the next world punishment will be meted out to you in the all fullness and severity of Divine justice. The slight voluntary penances and mortifications that we impose upon ourselves in this life, are of more value in the sight of God than the longest and severest sufferings endured against our will in the other life. "That we may not be punished in the other world," says St. John Chrysostom, "let us chastise ourselves with tears of contrition, with fasting, and other bodily mortifications." "For as you have yielded your members," writes St. Paul to the Romans, "to serve uncleanness and iniquity unto iniquity, so now yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification" (Rom. vi. 19). "Be converted to me with all your heart," God admonishes us through the mouth of His prophet. Cleanse, therefore, your souls from the stains of sin in the Blood of the Lamb in the Sacrament of Penance. A good confession is the foundation and first requisite of a life of penance. But be not satisfied with going to confession and performing the slight penance imposed on you, but "make your ways and your doings good." Your thoughts, desires, words and actions must become pleasing in the sight of God. Bring forth worthy fruits of penance. It is not an easy thing to lead a penitential life, but its fruits are precious and enduring. It will reconcile us with God and avert from us His punishments, it will console us in the hour of death and open to us the gates of the heavenly paradise. There are only two roads that lead to this heavenly paradise: the road of innocence and the road of penance. If, then, we have left the former, we must walk the latter. But, unless we do penance for our sins, we shall all likewise perish. Amen.

Repentance

by the curé of ars

Woe is me, for I have sinned so much during my life.—Confessions of St. Augustine.

importance

Thus spoke St. Augustine, when he thought over his past life, which he had spent incessantly in the abominable vice of impurity. As often as the thought occurred to him, his heart was torn and devoured by repentance. "Oh, my Lord," he exclaimed, "I have lived without loving Thee; oh, my Lord, how many precious years have I lost! Deign, O Lord, I implore Thee, to efface from Thy memory my past faults!" Oh, precious tears, O salutary contrition, which made of such a great sinner so great a saint! Oh, how quickly does a really contrite heart regain the friendship of God! Ah, would to God that every time we let our sins pass before our mind's eye, we could say with the repentant St. Augustine: "Ah, woe is me. I have sinned much during my life; have mercy on me, O Lord!" How soon would we alter our mode of living! Yes, my brethren, let us all who are here present, confess with the same fervent repentance and sincerity, that we are great sinners who deserve to experience the full wrath of God. And let us praise God's infinite mercy, who gives us abundantly of His treasures to solace us in our misery. If our sins have been ever so great, and our life has been ever so dissolute, we are sure of His pardon, if we follow the example of the prodigal son and throw ourselves with a contrite heart at the feet of the best of fathers. Now let me show to you, my Christian friends, that our repentance must have this quality before it can procure for us pardon for our sins: The sinner must, in consequence of his repentance, hate his sins sincerely, and detest them.

motives for repentance

To make you fully understand what repentance, i.e., the pain which our sins should cause our conscience, means, I

would have to show you on the one hand the abhorrence which the Lord has for them, and the torments which He had to suffer to gain pardon for them from God the Father, and on the other hand the blessings we lose by committing sin, and the evils which we bring down upon ourselves in the next world; but no man will ever be able to understand this fully. Where shall I lead you, my brethren, to show you this repentance? Into the solitude of the desert, perhaps, where so many saints spent twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, or even eighty years of their lives, bemoaning faults which were no faults in the eyes of the world. No, your heart would not be moved by such as these. Or shall I lead you to the entrance of hell, so that you may hear the woeful cries and howls, and gnashing of teeth, which is caused by the repentance of their sins; but though bitter and hard to bear, their pain and repentance is useless. No, my brethren, you would not learn here the real repentance which you should feel over your sins. Oh, if I could only lead you to the foot of the cross which is still reddened with the precious Blood of our Lord, shed to wash away our sins! Oh, if I could only lead you into that garden of sorrow, where our Lord shed for our sins, not ordinary tears, but blood, which flowed forth from all the pores of His body! Oh, if I could only show Him to you laden with the cross, staggering along the streets of Jerusalem, at every step He stumbles and is driven on by kicks. Oh, if I could only lead you to Mount Calvary, where our Lord died, for the sake of our salvation. But even if I could do all that, it would be necessary that God should give you the grace of inflaming in your heart the burning love of a St. Bernard, who broke out in tears at the mere sight of the cross. Oh, beautiful and precious repentance, how happy is he who harbors thee in his heart! But to whom am I addressing myself: where is he who feels it in his heart? Alas, I do not know. Is it to that head-strong sinner who has abandoned his God and neglected his soul for twenty or thirty years? No, that would be like trying to soften a rock by pouring water over it. Or to that Christian who has neglected missions, and ceased prayers, and despised the admonitions of his spiritual adviser?

No, that would be like trying to heat water by adding ice to it. Or, perhaps, to those persons who feel satisfied if they make their Easter duty, and then, year in and year out, continue in the same sinful course of living. No, those are the victims which are fattened to serve as food for the eternal flames. Or to those Christians who go to Communion every month, and fall back into their sins every day? No, for they are like the blind, who do not know what they do, or what they ought to do. To whom shall I address myself, then? Alas, I do not know. Oh, my Lord, where shall I look for it, where shall I find it? Yes, my Lord, I know whence it comes and who bestows it. It comes from heaven, and Thou dost bestow it, O Lord. Oh, my Lord, we implore Thee, bestow it upon us, the repentance which crushes and devours our heart; this beautiful repentance which disarms God's justice and changes an eternity of misery into eternal bliss. Oh, beautiful virtue, how necessary thou art, and how seldom to be found! And yet, without it there can be no pardon, no heaven, and, more than that, without it all is in vain: penance, charity, alms, or anything else we might do to gain the eternal reward.

QUALITIES OF REPENTANCE

But we may ask, "What does this word 'repentance' mean, and how can we tell whether we have it or not?" My brethren, if you will listen to me, I will explain to you how you can find out whether you have it or not, and if you have it not, how you may obtain it. Now, if you ask me what repentance is, I tell you that it is an anguish of the soul, and a detestation for past sin, and a firm resolve never to sin again. Yes, my brethren, this is the foremost of all conditions which God makes before pardoning our sins, and it can never be dispensed with. A sickness which deprives us of speech, may dispense us from confession; a sudden death may dispense us from the necessity of giving satisfaction for our sins during life, but with repentance it is different. Without it, it is impossible, absolutely impossible, to obtain forgiveness. Yes, my brethren, I must say with deep regret

that the want of repentance is the cause of a great number of sacrilegious confessions and Communions, and what is still more to be regretted is the circumstance that many do not realize what a sad state they are in, and live and die in it. Now, my friends, if we had the misfortune to conceal a sin in confession, this sin is constantly before our eyes like a monster which threatens to devour us, and it causes us to soon go to confession again, so as to free ourselves from it. But it is different with repentance; we confess, but our heart does not take part in the accusation which we make against ourselves. We approach the Holy Sacrament with as cold, unfeeling, and indifferent a heart as if performing an indifferent act of no consequence. Thus we live from day to day, from year to year, until we approach death, when we expect to find that we have done something to our credit, only to discover nothing but sacrileges, which we have committed by our confessions and Communions. Oh, my God, how many Christians there are who will discover at the hour of their death nothing but invalid confessions! But I will not go further into this matter, for fear that I may frighten you, and yet you ought really to be brought to the verge of despair, so that you may stop immediately, and improve your condition right now, instead of waiting until that moment when you will recognize your condition, and when it will be too late to improve it. But let us continue with our explanation, and you will soon learn, my brethren, whether you had the repentance in all your confessions, which is so absolutely necessary for the forgiveness of sin.

I said that repentance is an anguish of soul. It is absolutely necessary that a sinner weep over his sins either in this world or the next. In this world we can wipe out our sins by repentance, but not in the next. We should be very grateful to our dear Lord that the anguish of our soul is sufficient for Him to let it be followed by eternal joy, instead of making us suffer that eternal repentance and those awful tortures which would be our lot in the next life, that is, hell. Oh, my God, with how little art Thou satisfied!

Now, let me tell you that this anguish of soul must have

four qualities; if any one of these qualities is wanting, we can not obtain forgiveness for our sins. The first quality is that it must come from the bottom of the heart. It need not necessarily show itself in tears; they are good and useful, but they are not essential. It is a fact that when St. Paul and the penitent thief turned to God, it is not reported that they wept, and yet their anguish of soul was sincere.

No, my friends, you must not rely on tears alone. They are often deceiving, and many persons weep in the confessional and fall back into the same sin at the first opportunity. The anguish of soul which God demands of us, is like the one of which the prophet says: "Rend your heart and not your garments. A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit; a contrite and humble heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise."

Why does God require that our heart should feel this anguish? Because it is in the heart we commit our sins. "It is in the heart," says the Lord, "where all bad thoughts, all sinful desires, originate." Therefore, if our heart is guilty, the heart must suffer, or God will never forgive us.

The second quality of this anguish which we must feel over our sins, is that it must be supernatural; that means, that the Holy Ghost and not natural causes must call it forth. To be troubled about a sin one has committed because it would exclude us from paradise and lead us into hell, is a supernatural motive, of which the Holy Ghost is the originator, and will lead to true repentance. But to be troubled about a sin because of the shame which will be the consequence, or the misfortune it will cause us, that is merely a natural sorrow, which does not merit pardon. It is perfectly plain, then, that the anguish of soul caused by our sins, must arise from our love of God and our fear of His chastisement. He who, in his repentance, thinks only of God, feels a perfect repentance, which, from its very inception, purifies the sinner even before the reception of absolution. But he who only repents of his sins merely on account of the temporal punishments which they will bring upon him, has no proper repentance, and is not justified in expecting forgiveness of his sins.

The third quality of repentance is that it must be unlimited, that

is, the anguish it calls forth must be greater than any other sorrow, as, for instance, at the loss of our parents, or our health, or in general at the loss of anything that is dearest to us in this life. The reason why our sorrow must be so great, is because it must be equivalent to the loss it will cause us, and the misfortune it will bring us after our death. Imagine, then, how great an anguish ought to be ours over a sin which deprives us of all the glories of heaven, alienates our dear Lord from us, and casts us into hell, which is the greatest of all misfortunes. But, you may ask, how are we to know whether we possess this true repentance? Nothing is easier. If you have real repentance, you will neither act, nor think, as you did before, and you will change your mode of life completely; you will hate what you have loved and you will love what you have despised and avoided. For instance, if you had to confess that in action and speech you were of a hasty temper, you would hereafter be remarkable for your gentleness of behavior, and your consideration for all. You need not trouble yourself whether you have made a perfect confession, as errors are easily committed, but the consequence of your confession should be that the people say of you: "How he has changed; he is not the same man. A wonderful change has taken place in him!" Oh, my Lord, how rare are the confessions which cause such a great change!

The fourth and last quality is that repentance must be comprehensive. We see in the lives of the saints, in regard to the comprehensiveness of repentance, that we can not receive pardon for one mortal sin, even if we have properly repented the same, if we do not feel the same repentance for all our mortal sins.

History furnishes us with an example which shows us how absolutely necessary the saints considered this anguish over our sins, to obtain forgiveness. One of the papal officers fell sick. The Holy Father, who had a high esteem of his bravery and sanctity of life, sent one of his cardinals to express his sympathy, and to give him general absolution. "Tell the Holy Father," said the dying man to the Cardinal, "that I am very thankful to him for his tender regard, but tell him also that I would be infinitely more thankful to him if he would pray

to God to obtain for me the grace of a true repentance for my sins. Oh!" he cried, "what good is anything to me if my heart does not break with anguish at the thought that I have offended so good a God. Oh, Lord, if it be possible, make the repentance over my sins equal to the offence which I have given you!"

CONCLUSION

And this disposition is obtained by prayer—earnest, fervent prayer. "Create a clean heart in me, O God: and renew a right spirit within my bowels. Cast me not away from thy face, and take not thy holy spirit from me," etc. (Ps. l. 12). Joined to this repentance will naturally be a firm resolve not to commit the sin again; and this is the contrite and humble heart which God will not despise. Such a one He will receive again as His child, and restore to him all the privileges of a child of God, and heir to the Heavenly Kingdom.

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FOURTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE WORD OF GOD

TEXT

The multitudes pressed upon him to hear the word of God.—LUKE v. 1.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. Our Lord had been up to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, had returned to Galilee, and was at His favorite city Capharnaum. Knowing that the wondrous teacher was again in their vicinity the people came from all around anxious to hear from Him the word of God. Neither distance nor hardships offered a hindrance to them, because *He* was speaking who had the words of eternal life.

The eagerness manifested by these multitudes to learn the teachings of Christ and the reverence with which they doubtless listened to Him are a lesson to all Christians. Christ speaks to us now through His Church; He speaks the words of salvation, which are absolutely necessary for us, and which we cannot know without Him. How anxious therefore should we be to hear what the Church has to teach us, and how faithful should be our obedience to every word she utters!

I. **The necessity of divine revelation.** Human reason alone could never know the things necessary for eternal salvation, first, because these things are supernatural truths which transcend man's natural powers; and secondly, because history proves that even the greatest thinkers of all times have been unable to arrive at anything like a sufficient knowledge of mere natural religion. Hence the need of divine revelation.

II. **The necessity of a divinely authorized teacher.** 1. "Faith

cometh by hearing" (Rom. x. 17), *i.e.*, God has willed that we should receive His revelation from others; but these others must be divinely commissioned, "for how shall they preach unless they be sent?" (Rom. x. 15). 2. At all times God has sent to man these divinely commissioned teachers. In the Old Law He spoke by the mouth of the Patriarchs and Prophets. Last of all He sent His Only-begotten Son and commanded all to hear and obey Him (Luke ix. 35). The Son in turn has commissioned the Apostles and their successors to teach all nations to the end of time the truths confided to His Church: "Going therefore, teach ye all nations," etc. (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20).

III. **The obligation of receiving religious instruction.** 1. The Bishops and priests are the authorized teachers of the faithful; hence their preaching should be received as the word of God, and not as the word of man. 2. The knowledge of certain truths is necessary for salvation; hence the faithful are bound to be instructed in their religion. 3. In the present age it is especially imperative that Catholics be well grounded in the teachings of their religion, because on the one hand the truths of faith are now bitterly attacked, and on the other, there is often a lamentable ignorance on the part of the faithful which leads to carelessness in practice, and many times to a total loss of faith.

Lessons. 1. The necessity of attending doctrinal and catechetical instructions, and of supporting Catholic schools and literature. 2. Let us try to emulate the interest of the multitudes spoken of in to-day's Gospel. Let us be not only hearers, but doers also of the Word (James i. 22).

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Preface

NECESSITY OF REVELATION

Such is the nature of the human mind and intellect that, although by means of diligent and laborious inquiry it is able of itself to investigate and discover many divine truths; yet

guided solely by its own lights it could never discover or know most of those things by which is attained eternal salvation, the principal end of man's creation and formation to the image and likeness of God.

It is true that "the invisible things of God, from the creation of the world, are," as the Apostle teaches, "clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: his eternal power also and divinity." [1] But "the mystery which had been hidden from ages and generations" so far transcends the reach of man's understanding, that were it not manifested by God to His saints, to whom He willed to make known by the gift of faith, "the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ," [2] man could never by any effort aspire to such wisdom.

NECESSITY OF AUTHORIZED TEACHERS

But, as "faith cometh by hearing," [3] it is clear how necessary at all times for the attainment of eternal salvation has been the labor and faithful ministry of an authorized teacher; for it is written, "how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they be sent?" [4]

And, indeed, never, from the very creation of the world, has God, most merciful and benignant, been wanting to His own; but "at sundry times and in divers manners spoke to the fathers by the Prophets"; [5] and pointed out, in a manner suited to the times and circumstances, a sure and direct path to the happiness of heaven. But, as He had foretold that He would give a teacher of justice to be the light of the Gentiles that His salvation might reach to the ends of the earth, [6] "in these days he hath spoken to us by his Son," [7] whom also by a voice from heaven, "from the excellent glory," [8] He has commanded all to hear and to obey. Then the Son gave some to be apostles,

[1] Rom. i. 20.
[2] Coloss. i. 26, 27.
[3] Rom. x. 17.
[4] Rom. x. 14, 15.
[5] Heb. i. 1.
[6] Is. xix. 6.
[7] Heb. i. 2.
[8] 2 Pet. i. 17.

and some prophets, and others pastors and teachers," [9] to announce the word of life; that we be not carried about like children with every wind of doctrine, but holding fast to the firm foundation of the faith, "may be built together into a habitation of God in the Holy Ghost." [10]

THE WORD OF THE CHURCH'S PASTORS IS GOD'S WORD

Lest any should receive the word of God from the ministers of the Church, not as the word of Christ, which it really is, but as the word of man, the same Saviour has ordained that their ministry should be invested with so great authority that He says to them: "He that hears you, hears me, and he that despises you, despises me." [11] These words our Lord spoke not only of those to whom His words were addressed, but likewise of all who, by legitimate succession, should discharge the ministry of the word, promising to be with them "all days, even to the consummation of the world." [12]

PECULIAR NECESSITY OF PASTORAL INSTRUCTION IN THESE DAYS

But although the preaching of the divine word should never be interrupted in the Church of God, in these our days it becomes necessary to labor with more than ordinary zeal and piety to nurture and strengthen the faithful with sound and wholesome doctrine, as with the food of life. For "false prophets have gone forth into the world" [13] "with various and strange doctrines" [14] to corrupt the minds of the faithful; of whom the Lord has said: "I sent them not, and they ran; I spoke not to them, yet they prophesied." [15]

In this unholy work, to such extremes has their impiety, practiced in all the arts of Satan, been carried, that it would seem almost impossible to confine it within bounds; and did

[9] Eph. iv. 11.
[10] Eph. ii. 22.
[11] Luke x. 16.
[12] Matt. xxviii. 20.
[13] 1 John iv. 1.
[14] Heb. xiii. 9.
[15] Jerem. xxiii. 21.

we not rely on the splendid promises of the Saviour, who declared that He had built His Church on so solid a foundation, that the gates of hell shall never prevail against it,[16] we should have good reason to fear lest the Church, beset on every side by such a host of enemies and assailed by so many and such formidable machinations should, in these days, fall beneath their combined efforts.

For—to say nothing of those illustrious states which heretofore professed, in piety and holiness, the Catholic faith transmitted to them by their ancestors, but are now gone astray, wandering from the paths of truth and openly declaring that their best claims to piety are founded on a total abandonment of the faith of their fathers—there is no region however remote, no place however securely guarded, no corner of Christendom into which this pestilence has not sought secretly to insinuate itself.

For those who intended to corrupt the minds of the faithful, knowing that they could not hold immediate personal intercourse with all, and thus pour into their ears their poisoned doctrines, adopted another plan which enabled them to disseminate error and impiety more easily and extensively. Besides those voluminous works by which they sought the subversion of the Catholic faith—to guard against which volumes required perhaps little labor or circumspection since their contents were clearly heretical—they also composed innumerable smaller books, which, veiling their errors under the semblance of piety, deceived with incredible facility the unsuspecting minds of simple folk.

NECESSITY OF AN AUTHORITATIVE CATECHISM

The Fathers, therefore, of the general Council of Trent, anxious to apply some healing remedy to so great and pernicious an evil, were not satisfied with having decided the more important points of Catholic doctrine against the heresies of our times, but deemed it further necessary to issue, for the instruction of the faithful in the very rudiments of faith, a form

[16] Matt. xvi. 18.

and method to be followed by those to whom are lawfully intrusted the duties of pastor and teacher. To works of this kind many, it is true, had already given their attention, and earned the reputation of great piety and learning. But the Fathers deemed it of the first importance that a work should appear, sanctioned by the authority of the Council, from which pastors and all others on whom the duty of imparting instruction devolves, may draw with security matter for the edification of the faithful; that as there is "one Lord, one faith,"[17] there may also be one standard and prescribed form of propounding the dogmas of faith, and instructing Christians in all the duties of piety.

THE SUBJECT MATTER OF THE CATECHISM

As, therefore, the design of the work embraces a variety of matter, it cannot be supposed that the Council intended that all the dogmas of Christianity should be explained with that minuteness of detail to be found in the works of those who profess to treat the teaching and doctrines of religion in their entirety. Such a task would be one of almost endless labor, and manifestly ill-suited to attain the proposed end. But, having undertaken to instruct pastors and such as have care of souls in those things that belong peculiarly to the pastoral office and are accommodated to the capacity of the faithful; the Council intended that such things only should be treated of as might assist the pious zeal of pastors in discharging the duty of instruction, should they not be very familiar with the more abstruse questions of theology.

Hence before we proceed to develop in detail the various parts of this summary of doctrine our purpose requires that we premise a few observations which the pastor should consider and bear in mind in order to know to what end, as it were, all his plans and labors and efforts are to be directed, and how this desired end may be more easily attained.

[17] Eph. iv. 5.

THE END OF RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION: I. KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

The first is always to recollect that all Christian knowledge is reduced to one single head, or rather, to use the words of the Apostle, "this is eternal life, to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent." [18] A teacher in the Church will, therefore, use his best endeavors that the faithful desire earnestly "to know Jesus Christ and him crucified," [19] that they be firmly convinced, and with the most heartfelt piety and devotion believe, that there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved," [20] for "he is the propitiation for our sins." [21]

2. OBSERVANCE OF THE COMMANDMENTS

But as "by this we know that we have known him, if we keep his commandments," [22] the next consideration, and one intimately connected with the preceding, is to press also upon the attention of the faithful that their lives are not to be wasted in ease and indolence, but that "we are to walk even as Christ walked," [23] "and pursue," with unremitting earnestness, "justice, godliness, faith, charity, patience, mildness"; [24] for, "he gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and might cleanse to himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works." [25] These things the Apostle commands pastors to speak and to exhort.

3. CHARITY

But as our Lord and Saviour has not only declared, but has also proved by His own example, that "the Law and the Prophets depend on love," [26] and as according to the Apostle,

[18] John xvii. 3.
[19] 1 Cor. ii. 2.
[20] Acts iv. 12.
[21] 1 John ii. 2.
[22] 1 John ii. 3.
[23] 1 John ii. 6.
[24] 1 Tim. vi. 11.
[25] Tit. ii. 14.
[26] Matt. xxii. 40.

charity is the end of the commandments, and the fulfilment of the law,[27] it is unquestionably a chief duty of the pastor to use the utmost diligence to excite the faithful to a love of the infinite goodness of God towards us, that burning with a sort of divine ardor, they may be powerfully attracted to the supreme and all perfect good, to adhere to which is true and solid happiness, as is fully experienced by him who can say with the Prophet: "What have I in heaven but thee? and besides thee what do I desire upon earth?" [28] This, assuredly, is that more excellent way [29] pointed out by the Apostle when he sums up all his doctrines and instructions in charity, "which never faileth";[30] for whatever is proposed by the pastor, whether it be the exercise of faith, of hope, or of some moral virtue; the love of God should be so strongly insisted upon by him, as to show clearly that all the works of perfect Christian virtue can have no other origin, no other end than divine love.[31]

THE METHOD OF IMPARTING RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION

But as in imparting instruction of any sort the manner of communicating it is of highest importance, so in conveying religious instruction to the people, the method should be deemed of the greatest moment.

I. ATTENTION TO THE CAPACITY OF THE HEARER

Age, capacity, manners and condition must be borne in mind, so that he who instructs may become all things to all men, and be able to gain all to Christ,[32] and prove himself a faithful minister and steward,[33] and, like a good and faithful servant, be found worthy to be placed by his Lord over many things.[34] The priest must not imagine that those committed to his care are all of equal capacity or like dispositions, so as to enable

[27] 1 Tim. i. 5; Rom. xiii. 8.
[28] Psalm lxxii. 25.
[29] 1 Cor. xii. 31.
[30] 1 Cor. xiii. 8.
[31] 1 Cor. xvi. 14.
[32] 1 Cor. ix. 22.
[33] 1 Cor. iv. 1, 2.
[34] Matt. xxv. 23.

him to apply the same method of instruction to lead all to knowledge and piety; for some are, "as it were new-born infants," [35] others are growing up in Christ, while a few are, so to say, of full maturity. Hence the necessity of considering who they are that have occasion for milk, who for more solid food,[36] and of affording to each such nourishment of doctrine as may give spiritual increase, "until we all meet in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God into a perfect man, into the measure of the age of the fulness of Christ." [37] This the Apostle inculcates for all by his own example when he says that he is a debtor to the Greek and to the Barbarian, to the wise and to the unwise,[38] thus giving all who are called to this ministry to understand that in announcing the mysteries of faith and the precepts of morality, the instruction is to be so accommodated to the capacity and intelligence of the hearers, that, whilst the minds of the strong are filled with spiritual food, the little ones be not suffered to perish with hunger, asking for bread, "whilst there is none to break it to them." [39]

2. ZEAL

Nor should our zeal in communicating Christian knowledge be relaxed, because it has sometimes to be exercised in expounding matters apparently humble and unimportant, and, therefore comparatively uninteresting to minds accustomed to the contemplation of the more sublime truths of religion. If the Wisdom of the eternal Father descended upon the earth in the meanness of our flesh to teach us the maxims of a heavenly life, who is there whom the love of Christ does not compel [40] to become little in the midst of his brethren, and, as a nurse fostering her children, so anxiously to wish for the salvation of his neighbor as to be ready like the Apostle not only to impart

[35] 1 Pet. ii. 2.
[36] 1 Cor. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12.
[37] Eph. iv. 13.
[38] Rom. i. 14.
[39] Heb. v. 14; Lamen. iv. 4.
[40] 2 Cor. v. 14.

to them the Gospel of Jesus Christ, but even to give his own life for them?[41]

3. STUDY

Now all the doctrines in which the faithful are to be instructed are derived from the word of God, which includes Scripture and tradition. To the study of these, therefore, the pastor should devote his days and his nights, always keeping in mind the admonition of St. Paul to Timothy, which all who have the care of souls should consider as addressed to themselves: "Attend to reading, to exhortation, and to doctrine,[42] for all Scripture divinely inspired is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice, that the man of God may be perfect, furnished to every good work."[43]

DIVISION OF THIS CATECHISM

The truths revealed by Almighty God are so many and so various that it is no easy task to acquire a knowledge of them, or, having done so, to remember them so well as to be able to explain them with ease and readiness when occasion requires. Hence our predecessors in the faith have very wisely reduced all the doctrines of salvation to these four heads: The Apostles' Creed, the Sacraments, the ten Commandments, and the Lord's Prayer.

FIRST PART

The part on the Creed contains all that is to be held according to Christian faith, whether it regard the knowledge of God, the creation and government of the world, or the redemption of man, the rewards of the good and the punishments of the wicked. The part devoted to the seven Sacraments teaches us what are the signs, and, as it were, the instruments of grace. In the part on the Decalogue is described whatever has reference to the law, "the end whereof is charity."[44] Finally, the Lord's Prayer contains whatever can be the object of the

[41] 1 Thess. ii. 7, 8.
[42] 1 Tim. iv. 13.
[43] 2 Tim. iii. 16, 17.
[44] 1 Tim. i. 5.

Christian's desires, or hopes, or prayers. The exposition, therefore, of these four parts, which are, as it were, the general heads of Sacred Scripture, includes almost everything that a Christian should learn.

COMBINATION OF INSTRUCTION ON THE CATECHISM WITH HOMILY ON THE GOSPEL

We, therefore, deem it proper to inform pastors that, whenever they have occasion, in the ordinary discharge of their duty, to expound any passage of the Gospel or any other part of Scripture, they will find its subject matter treated under some one of the four heads already enumerated, to which they will recur, as to the source from which their instruction is to be drawn.

Thus, if the Gospel of the first Sunday of Advent is to be explained, "There shall be signs in the sun and in the moon, etc.," [45] whatever regards its explanation is contained under the Article of the Creed, "He shall come to judge the living and the dead"; and by embodying the substance of that Article in his exposition, the pastor will at once instruct his people in the Creed and in the Gospel. Whenever, therefore, he has to communicate instruction and expound the Scriptures, he will observe the same rule of referring all to these four principal heads under which, as we observed, the whole teaching and doctrine of Holy Scripture is contained. As for method, however, he is free to follow that which he deems best suited to the circumstances of persons and time.

Sermons

On Religious Authority

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRUEHL, D.D.

They said therefore unto him: Who art thou, that we may give an answer to them that sent us?—John i. 22.

INTRODUCTION: RELIGIOUS CONFUSION OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

My friends: The saddest sight that confronts us in our days is the confusion which prevails in religious matters. Outside

[45] Luke xxi. 25.

of the Church of Rome, there is no harmony with regard to any point of doctrine. The utter confusion which reigns supreme is as bad as that which existed at Babel, when the Lord confounded the tongues of men. It is well nigh impossible to count the number of sects into which Christianity has been broken up. Their number is legion, and the process of dissolution is still going on. This condition is more deplorable, since it takes away from the efficiency of Christianity and makes men despair of finding the truth in this Babel of conflicting opinions. Hence, it is that so many forsake Christianity altogether and embrace infidelity.

The cause for this lamentable confusion is not far to seek; it is due to the absence of authority. Without a teaching authority there can be no unity of faith and no harmony of doctrine. Where everyone is allowed to follow his own private judgment, the outcome can only be confusion. But this clearly was not the intention of Christ, who speaks of one shepherd and one fold. Nor was it what St. Paul thought the Church should be. Here is St. Paul's beautiful and inspiring description of the Church: "One body and one spirit; as you are called in one hope of your calling. One Lord, one faith, one baptism. One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all" (Ephes. iv. 4–6). Unity, then, is essential to the Church of God; confusion is not of heaven; it is not a quality of God's works. In view of these facts, it will be very appropriate for us to meditate on the nature and importance of religious authority, a topic which is quite naturally suggested by the gospel of the day.

NECESSITY OF RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY

That religion should be taught in an authoritative way is the most natural thing and perfectly in agreement with human nature. Most of our knowledge comes by way of instruction. There is very little that we learn through our own personal efforts. The information we gain as the result of private research and personal investigation is trifling, when compared to the vast bulk of knowledge which comes to us through the

channels of instruction. Man is a being that is taught. He lives, we might say, by instruction.

If this is true in a general way, why should it not also be applicable to the case of religion? If in religion man were to be limited to what he acquires by his own study and thought, the result would, indeed, be very meager. As the greater part of our profane knowledge comes through instruction, so also our religious knowledge must largely come in the same way. St. Paul says: "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? Or how shall they believe him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? Faith then cometh by hearing; and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x.).

But if religious knowledge is to be imparted by means of instruction, as being the most suitable way for man, then there also must be established a recognized religious authority. This is a logical and reasonable demand; for, in matters of such tremendous importance we cannot be satisfied with the word of the first comer. We wish to have a guarantee that our trust is not misplaced. We have a right to know, in whose name our would-be instructor takes it upon himself to teach us? We rightly ask, who has sent him.

In so far the Pharisees were right, when they sent to St. John inquiring into his authority. Nor did the Precursor resent their questions, but he gave them his credentials, referring them to the Prophet Isaias, who had predicted his coming and his mission. Thus, St. John proved that he possessed authority to speak in religious matters and that he spoke not merely in his own name. The same thing is required of every religious teacher. He must give evidence of his mission. St. Paul requires this mission in the preacher, without which his word lacks authority: "And how shall they preach," he demands, "unless they be sent, as it is written: How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, of them that bring glad tidings of good things?" (Rom. x. 15).

And so we ask of all those who profess to teach religion this momentous question: Who art thou? Who has given you authority to speak on the things that pertain to God, and to

heaven and to eternity? Who are you that you should presume to speak of things that transcend human ken?

THE CHURCH HAS THE AUTHORITY TO TEACH

Knowing man's needs, Christ has constituted in this world a religious authority, commissioned to teach mankind and assisted by God's grace to perform properly this important task. If it had not been for this authority, what would have become of the gospel, of the truth which Christ brought from heaven? Undoubtedly, it would have been lost or adulterated in the course of the centuries. Only because Christ founded a Church and because He remained with this Church is there any Christianity in the world to-day. Had He left things to chance, men would long since have scattered to the winds the treasures of revelation or distorted them from their original sense beyond recognition. In fact, this is the very thing that has happened outside of the Church. The rich deposit of faith has been wasted, and the truth has been whittled away.

Christ has well provided for the spreading and the preservation of divine truth, which is so indispensable to the temporal and eternal welfare of mankind. It is incredible, that He should have thrown His heavenly message on the stream of time without taking proper care that it would be transmitted to posterity. Ordinary prudence would prompt a different course, and divine wisdom would certainly find a better way to do things.

This is what the Lord actually did. He selected a body of men and gave them the solemn command to preach His word and promised them His assistance to the end of the world. In this manner, the perpetuation of the truth was assured. The establishment of this teaching authority was His last act on earth. "And Jesus coming, spoke to them, saying: All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth. Going therefore, teach ye all nations; baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And behold I am with you all days, even to the consummation of the

world" (Matt. xxviii. 18–20). These words are clear. In order that the saving truth should not perish from this earth, the Lord entrusted it to the care of the Church. This church He invested with the highest authority in religious matters, for He also says: "He that heareth you, heareth Me; and he that despiseth you, despiseth Me; and he that despiseth Me, despiseth him that sent me" (Luke x. 16).

From these passages we conclude that there exists on earth a body of men, organized and constituted by Christ for the purpose of teaching men and guiding them to eternal truth. It also follows that, apart from this body, no one has the right to teach in the name of Christ. Hence, the question of religious authority resolves itself into the question of communion with the Church. Of him who claims to teach in the name of Christ, we ask, therefore: Has the Church sent you? Do you come to us with a mission from the Church? The Catholic priest will answer without hesitation: I have been sent. I have received my mission from the bishop of this diocese. He, in turn, has received his mission to teach from the Holy Father in Rome. The Pope of Rome has received the divine mission to teach from Christ, for he can trace his succession to the Prince of the Apostles. Thus, in the Church we find religious authority, because in it we have the apostolic succession and, accordingly, the divine mission to teach.

FRUITS OF THE CHURCH'S TEACHING AUTHORITY

The blessings that flow from this authority instituted by our Lord are numerous. We can only rehearse a few of them. First among them is the spirit of union and harmony that prevails in the Catholic Church. There are no bitter disputes concerning the fundamentals of our holy faith. There is a happy agreement in respect of these points. And out of this unity of faith there grows also a unity of charity and brotherhood.

But greatest of all blessings is the peaceful sense of assurance which this authority begets. Converts, admitted to the communion of Rome, protest that they find in the Church a

peaceful repose of mind to which they had been strangers. They feel as though they had made the harbor after a stormy and rough sea. They at last have found the anchor which steadies them and promises security. This ending of all anxiety, this profound calm is a great gift. Every Catholic knows this unshakable assurance and prizes it highly. A plain man was being chaffed about his faith by some frivolous young men who thought they were enlightened. This is the answer he gave them: "Gentlemen, you know full well that I have no learning and that I am unable to make an elaborate defense of my faith. But my heart will answer you better than my lips can. I am happy, and what makes me happy is the knowledge and firm conviction that I belong to that Church which cannot err in what she teaches, and that I put into practice as far as lies in my power the duties it imposes on me. Is there one among you who can say as much?" There are the sweet fruits of that teaching authority which Christ has established and which is exercised in the Catholic Church.

My dear friends: Let us regard the Church with love and gratitude and humbly accept her teaching as the word of God. Through her we are preserved from error and doubt. To her we may always look with trust and confidence, for, according to the testimony of St. Paul, she is "the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. iii. 15). Amen.

Eagerness to Hear the Word of God

BY THE VERY REV. F. C. DOYLE, O.S.B.

The multitudes pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God.—Luke v. 1.

INTRODUCTION

In to-day's Gospel we read how even the publicans and sinners drew near unto Him to hear Him. And in another place St. Luke tells us that "the multitudes pressed upon Jesus to hear the word of God."

Therefore, eagerness to hear and to learn the word of God is the lesson which you are to learn. In order to stir up within

you a resolution to take that lesson to heart, I will this morning put before you the reasons which should call forth this eagerness and this zeal. Before so doing it, let us first clearly state what I mean by the word of God. You will, no doubt, surmise that I shall say it is the Sacred Scripture; or, that it is that vast multitude of spiritual works which, in a diluted form, give us the substance of the sacred text. These last mentioned works may, indeed, be called the word of God, just as the Scripture is; nevertheless, while not setting them aside, but on the contrary, most earnestly urging you to hear and to heed them, I do not mean them, but rather the spoken word of instruction in the teaching of the Church, whether on morals or on dogma; this it is that I designate as the word of God; for it is so in very deed. In proof of which statement I may recall to your minds the fact that Christ sent His apostles and their successors to teach. In this mission He promised to be with them; to preserve them from error; nay, He went so far as to say that those who should hear them and their successors should, as it were, receive the word from His own blessed mouth. Therefore, in the instructions of the Church, whether on dogma or on morals, you have the living voice of God. It speaks in His name. Its word is God's word, which you ought to be eager to hear and to learn, the reasons for which eagerness I will here set before you.

THE WORD OF GOD IS LIVING

The instruction contained in the living teaching of the Church is, as St. Paul says, "a living word." Being a living word, it has the power of imparting life to those who hear and accept it. Now, what is the germ of that spiritual life, out of which all further development must proceed? It is faith. From this all other supernatural virtues grow. But whence comes this faith? It comes by hearing; by listening to the living voice teaching, explaining, and proving. When we have laid hold of faith, we possess a treasure without which it is impossible to please God. All natural virtues are valueless for eternal life unless grafted on this faith as on their parent stock.

Hence, the first reason for being eager to hear the word of God is that it drops into our souls the germ of faith.

THE WORD OF GOD IS EFFICACIOUS

Faith, however, though excellent in itself and the root or germ whence spring all other supernatural virtues, is not of itself sufficient to save the soul of a man endowed with responsibility. A faith that is not fruitful in good works is dead. What, then, is it that will make faith fruitful? Once again, it is the word of God, which is not only living but efficacious. It moves to action. It pushes on and constrains the soul which it has vivified to do good works for the glory of God, the advantage of its neighbor and the health of its own immortal being. It teaches us not only what to believe, but what to do, in order to please God. It teaches us what God has ordered men to do, in order rightfully to worship Him. Again, this knowledge comes by hearing, and the will to put that knowledge in practice is infused into the soul together with the knowledge which hearing imparts.

I appeal to you who hear me. Does not the living voice rouse the torpid will? Does it not awake the slumbering conscience? Does it not inspire that saving fear which is the beginning of wisdom and which causes the soul not only to believe, but to make that belief practical? Again, I appeal not only to your personal experience, but to the history of nations. These peoples to whom the word has been preached, and who had previously been seated in darkness, in the shadow of death, and plunged in the mire of degrading vices, were by the living, efficacious word of God roused to cast aside their darling vices and to live lives of holiness and justice. Christian Europe of the present day is one of the outcomes of the preaching of the word of God.

THE WORD OF GOD SAFEGUARDS OUR FAITH

Besides infusing into the soul the life germ of faith and fostering that germ till, putting forth all the energy that is in it, it blooms into the practice of Christian virtue, the word of

God, the living, efficacious word, has a further power, the power of safeguarding the precious faith which it imparts. Does faith need safeguarding? Undoubtedly it does. For, if it be the source of our spiritual life and action, the means by which we are able to please God and to win eternal life, it will naturally be an object against which the enemies of God and of man will direct all their malignant hatred. God leads men to faith and to holiness by the living word or teaching of His Church. The arch-enemy of God, in a certain sense mimicking the action of God, endeavors to destroy men by a word. As with God's word, so also with the devil's word; it is at one and the same time a written and a spoken word. The devil assails the precious germ of faith by the one and by the other. First, by the written word. In this age, the number of writers is, in a sense, infinite. Pamphlets, leaflets, magazines, newspapers, and books pour forth from the press in a stream that seems to be inexhaustible. It is rare that the men who produce these of set purpose attack in them either faith or morals. At least it is so in this country. Nevertheless, in their antagonism to the Catholic Church, their blows are indirectly aimed at her faith and at her teaching. By insinuation, by allusion, by covert sneer or by ignorant perversion of facts, they manage to pelt mud at her, and in this way to discredit her not only with her own children but with those who, though not of her fold, yet have for her those sentiments of respect and admiration begotten of her past history and of her glorious achievements in the centuries that have rolled on since Christ, the Head, died on Calvary. The reading public, and in these days almost every one reads, meets with these attacks in the most unexpected places. They are made in writings in which their presence is uncalled for, in which they appear to have been dragged in, and, though in the Catholic heart they excite disgust and righteous indignation, yet they leave a stain upon the mind even if they do not sow in it the germ of doubt and of unbelief. Not content with making use of the written word, the enemy of God stirs up those who are hostile to the Church to speak against her, and thus to make use of the powerful spoken word as an engine for her destruction. Though these

men are, as a general rule, quite incompetent to give an opinion, or to argue logically on matters of dogma or of philosophy, of history or of morality, yet they will speak, and some of them are bold enough even to write. Often enough it is in coarse ridicule, or in garbled history, or in calumnious assertions against the pastors and the teachers of our faith. This spoken and this written word are very active and dangerous enemies of that precious faith sown by the living and efficacious word of God. But there are other enemies which, if not active assailants of it, yet in a negative way are almost as efficient. One of these is the example of men who are without faith and who openly make profession of holding all religious beliefs in equal contempt. In spite of their unbelief, these men may be, to the eyes of their fellow men, upright, honorable, truthful, philanthropic, and moral. These, their natural virtues, may make them so lovable that to weak-kneed Christians they may become a stumbling-block, for, looking upon them, they will say, "These are all that we profess to be and they are what they are without that faith which, we are told, is essential to morality, which is the root of morality, its strength, its life."

To add still more weight to the side of the devil, there are the animal instincts of unregenerate nature. These are so powerful, so restless, so importunate in their craving for forbidden fruit that they urge men to question the truths of faith and the binding force of the laws which rest upon it.

With these enemies of faith before your eyes, it will be evident to each of you how necessary is the protective power of the word of God, or, in other words, how efficacious it is to furnish you with arms wherewith to defend yourselves against these enemies and to teach you so skilfully to use them as to render the attacks of your foes quite innocuous. For he who listens to that living word, who receives into his mind the instruction which it imparts, an instruction by which the dogmas and the practices of his Catholic faith are established and defended, will know how to meet and to scatter to the winds all the miserable sophisms of the Church's enemies. He will have acquired a clear knowledge of what his faith teaches.

He will have grasped the proofs which make it evident. He will be able to see at a glance when his adversaries are making gratuitous assertions, and he will sweep them aside as futile irrelevancies. He will be able to detect the neatly dressed up lie, the bold, shameless calumny so circumstantially recorded. He will then have at hand an intelligent, convincing answer to give to those who interrogate him concerning the faith that is in him. His knowledge will enable him not only to meet the written and the spoken word hostile to his faith, but to keep in check his own animal nature and its unruly passions which rebel with so great emphasis against the teaching of his faith and the restrictions which that teaching puts upon them. Therefore, the reasons why you should be eager to hear the word of God, to understand it, to learn it, are because it implants in you the germ of faith; it has the efficacy of making that faith fruitful; and it provides you with arms to defend it against the assaults of your enemies.

CONCLUSION

Let me, then, exhort you with all the earnestness of one who has at heart your eternal interests, to stir up within yourselves an eagerness to hear the word of God. By this eagerness I mean, of course, a zeal not only to hear it, but to acquire as clear and deep a knowledge of the truths of your holy religion as your capacity will admit. In order, however, that the knowledge thus acquired may be to you all that God intends it to be, you must come to the learning of it with the humility and the simplicity of little children. I say to the learning of it; for you must come to receive knowledge, not to object against and to criticize the doctrine set before you. If studied and learnt with these dispositions, the lessons of your faith will reveal to your minds the light of God's truth; they will touch your hearts and open them for the reception of all Christian virtues; they will fill you with so reverential and filial a fear of your Creator that you will put in practice His divine law; you will become doers and not merely hearers of that living, efficacious word which is able to save your souls.

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FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

SINS FORBIDDEN BY THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

TEXT

Be ye all of one mind . . . not rendering evil for evil.—1 Peter iii. 8, 9.

You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not kill. And whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.—Matt. v. 21, 22.

Analysis

Introduction. In this Gospel our Lord tells us that unless our justice abounds more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, we shall not be saved. The Scribes and Pharisees were wholly occupied with external observances and the outward appearances

of religion, caring little or nothing for the true virtue of the heart. The doctrine of Christ is quite the opposite. Our Lord tells us that we must not only refrain from the commission of such external acts of violence as murder, but we must also clear out of our hearts all anger and hatred of our neighbor; our internal sentiments, our thoughts, feelings and desires must be made to conform to our external appearance and outward show of virtue and religion.

I. **The external sins forbidden by the fifth Commandment.** 1. This precept prohibits the taking of human, and not of animal life, although cruelty to animals is also sinful. 2. It is only unjust homicide that is forbidden by this Commandment, for it is lawful to take human life in three cases: (a) in the time of war; (b) in punishing malefactors who have been lawfully condemned by the civil authorities (Rom. xiii. 4); (c) in necessary defense of one's life against an unjust aggressor. 3. He who wilfully and unjustly takes away another's life, or contributes to such a deed, is guilty of murder, *e.g.*, those who practice abortion. Likewise those who, through carelessness or neglect, cause another's death are guilty of homicide, and their sin is greater or less in proportion to the degree of their negligence, *e.g.*, reckless drivers, engineers, etc. 4. Suicide is similarly forbidden by the fifth Commandment, because a man has no more right to kill himself than to kill his neighbor. For the same reason no one has the right to risk his life without necessity, nor seriously to injure or impair his health. It is further forbidden to shorten one's days by excessive eating and drinking, by refusing to take remedies or to make use of other ordinary means of preserving life and strength. Hence the immorality of Christian Science. 5. The unlawful taking of human life is a most grievous crime (1 John iii. 15; Gen. iv. 10; ix. 6), because, (a) it is most injurious to man, robbing him of his greatest temporal possession, and often exposing him to eternal loss; (b) it is a crime against society which it thus unjustly deprives of its members, frequently substituting brute force for law and order; (c) it is an injury to

God, for it usurps power that belongs to God alone (Deut. xxxii. 39; Gen. ix. 6). 6. The fifth Commandment furthermore prohibits, (a) fighting, *i.e.*, all unjust encounters with others in which blows, wounds or bodily injuries are dealt; (b) quarrellings, *i.e.*, unjust hostile contentions or disputes, or the sinful exchange of bitter and injurious words. As our Lord says in to-day's Gospel, these may be very grievous sins.

II. **The internal sins forbidden by the fifth Commandment.** 1. This precept prohibits, first of all, unlawful anger, which is a feeling of displeasure towards another with a desire of revenge. Anger is unlawful, (a) when it is directed against the offender rather than his offence, and makes us desire his injury and ruin; (b) when it leads to excessive punishment or gets beyond the control of the reason. 2. Anger is lawful, however, when it is directed against the offense rather than the offender, and seeks only the latter's correction, or reasonable redress (Eph. iv. 26; Luke xix. 45). 3. Unlawful anger is a capital sin, and is mortal when serious and deliberate. 4. When anger hardens into a fixed and abiding state of resentment, wishing another evil and rejoicing over his misfortunes, it becomes hatred—a mortal sin. Mere dislike of another's bad qualities without ill will towards him is not hatred, but should be controlled.

Conclusion. 1. Many persons nowadays are like the Pharisees. As long as they go to Mass and the Sacraments, and perform certain external acts of religion, they consider themselves good Catholics, despite the fact that they are full of all kinds of thoughts of dislike, hatred, and even murder against their neighbor. 2. We should avoid not only injurious actions, but also harmful words, thoughts and desires. 3. Let us imitate the mildness and gentleness of our Saviour in all we do and think, and try to carry out in our lives the counsels given by St. Peter in to-day's Epistle.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Fifth Commandment

Thou shalt not kill.—Exod. xx. 13.

Utility and necessity of explaining this commandment

The great happiness proposed to the peacemakers, of being called "the children of God," should prove a powerful incentive to the pastor to explain with care and accuracy the obligations imposed by this Commandment. No means more efficacious can be adopted to promote peace and harmony among mankind, than the proper explanation of this Commandment and its holy and due observance by all. Then might we hope that men, united in the strictest bonds of union, would live in perfect peace and concord.

The necessity of explaining this Commandment to the faithful is proved by two considerations. Immediately after the earth was overwhelmed in universal deluge, this was the first prohibition made by God to man: "I will require the blood of your lives," He said, "at the hand of every beast and at the hand of man."[1] In the next place, among the precepts of the Old Law expounded by our Lord, this Commandment was mentioned first by Him, as may be seen by consulting the Gospel of St. Matthew, where the Redeemer says: "It has been said thou shalt not kill," etc.[2]

The faithful, on their part, should hear with willing attention the explanation of this Commandment, since its observance procures the security of their own lives. These words, "Thou shalt not kill," emphatically forbid the shedding of human blood; and they should be heard by all with the same pleasure as if God, expressly naming each individual, were to prohibit injury to be offered him under a threat of the divine anger and the heaviest chastisements. As, then, the announcement of this Commandment must be heard with pleasure, so should its observance be to us a pleasing duty.

[1] Gen. ix. 5.
[2] Matt. v. 21.

THE TWO PARTS OF THIS COMMANDMENT

In its explanation our Lord Himself points out its twofold obligation: the one is prohibitory and forbids us to kill; the other is mandatory and commands us to cherish sentiments of charity, concord, and friendship towards our enemies, to have peace with all men, and finally, to endure with patience every inconvenience.

EXCEPTIONS TO THE PROHIBITORY PART OF THE COMMANDMENT: I. THE KILLING OF ANIMALS

With regard to the prohibitory part of the Commandment, the pastor will first point out the exceptions to the law. In the first place, we are not prohibited to kill those animals which are intended to be the food of man. Since God intends that they should be eaten by man, it cannot be wrong to kill them. "When," says St. Augustine, "we hear the words 'thou shalt not kill,' we are not to understand the prohibition to extend to the fruits of the earth, which are insensible, nor to irrational animals, which form no part of the great society of mankind." [3]

2. EXECUTION OF CRIMINALS

Again, this prohibition does not apply to the civil authorities, to whom is intrusted power of life and death, by the legal and judicious exercise of which they punish the guilty and protect the innocent. The just use of this power, far from involving the crime of murder, is an act of paramount obedience to this Commandment which prohibits murder. The end of the Commandment is the preservation and security of human life. Now the punishments inflicted by the civil authority, which is the legitimate avenger of crime, naturally procure this end, since they give security to life by repressing outrage and violence. Hence these words of David: "In the morning I put to death all the wicked of the land, that I might cut off all the workers of iniquity from the city of the Lord." [4]

[3] De civit. Dei. lib. 1. c. 20; de morib. Manich. lib. 2. c. 13—15.

[4] Ps. c. 8; Aug., epist. 154; quoted in 23. q. 5. cap. de occidendis; epist. 54; cited ibid. cap. non est iniquitatis; other chapters in the same place; St. Thomas, IIa. IIæ. 64. a. 2; q. 108. a. 3.

3. KILLING IN JUST WAR

In like manner, the soldier is guiltless who, actuated not by motives of ambition or cruelty, but by a pure desire of serving the interests of his country, takes away the life of an enemy in a just war.[5]

Furthermore, there are on record instances of carnage executed by the special command of God Himself. The sons of Levi, who put to death so many thousands in one day, were guilty of no sin; when the slaughter had ceased, they were addressed by Moses in these words: "You have consecrated your hands this day to the Lord." [6]

4. KILLING BY ACCIDENT

Again, death caused, not by intent or design, but by accident, is not murder. "He that killed his neighbor ignorantly," says the book of Deuteronomy, "and who is proved to have had no hatred against him yesterday and the day before, but to have gone with him to the wood to hew wood, and in cutting down the tree the axe slipt out of his hand, and the iron slipping from the handle struck his friend and killed him, shall live." [7] Such accidental deaths, because inflicted without intent or design, involve no guilt whatever, and this is confirmed by the words of St. Augustine: "God forbid that what we do for a good and lawful end shall be imputed to us, if, contrary to our intention, evil thereby befall any one." [8]

There are, however, two cases in which guilt attaches to accidental death. The first case is when death results from an unlawful act; when, for instance, a person kicks or strikes a woman in a state of pregnancy, and abortion follows. The consequence, it is true, may not have been intended, but this does not exculpate the offender, because the act of striking a

[5] Aug. de civit. Dei. c. 26; quoted in 23. q. 5. cap. miles; on war see also St. Thomas, IIa. IIæ. q. 40, art. 4.
[6] Exod. xxxii. 29.
[7] Deut. xix.
[8] Epist. 154; quoted in 23. q. 5. c. de occidendis; see also many chapters in dist. 5; St. Thomas, IIa. IIæ., q. 64. a. 8; C. of Trent, Sess. 14. de reform. c. 7.

pregnant woman is in itself unlawful. The other case is when death is caused by negligence, carelessness, or want of due precaution.

5. KILLING IN SELF-DEFENCE

If a man kill another in self-defence, having used every means consistent with his own safety to avoid the infliction of death, he evidently does not violate this Commandment.

THIS COMMANDMENT FORBIDS MURDER

The above are the cases in which life may be taken without the guilt of murder; and with these exceptions the precept binds universally whether we consider the person who kills, the person killed, or the means used to kill.

As to the person who kills, the Commandment recognizes no exception whatever, be he rich or powerful, master or parent. All, without exception of person or distinction of rank, are forbidden to kill.

With regard to the person killed, the obligation of the law is equally extensive, embracing every human creature. There is no individual, however humble or lowly his condition, whose life is not shielded by this law.

It also forbids suicide. No man possesses such absolute jurisdiction over himself as to be at liberty to put himself to death. Hence we find that the Commandment does not say: "Thou shalt not kill another," but simply: "Thou shalt not kill."

Finally, if we consider the numerous means by which murder may be committed, the law admits of no exception. Not only does it forbid to take away the life of another by laying violent hands on him, by means of a sword, a stone, a stick, a halter, or by administering poison; but also strictly prohibits the accomplishment of the death of another by counsel, assistance, or any other means of co-operation.

SINFUL ANGER IS ALSO FORBIDDEN BY THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

The Jews, with singular dulness of apprehension, thought that to abstain from taking life with their own hands was enough

to satisfy the obligation imposed by this Commmandment. But the Christian, instructed in the interpretation of Jesus Christ, has learned that the precept is spiritual, and that it commands us not only to keep our hands unstained, but our hearts pure and undefiled; hence what the Jews regarded as quite sufficient, the Christian considers as only a partial compliance with the law. For the Gospel has taught that it is unlawful even to be angry with a brother: "But I say to you that whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment. And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire." [9] From these words it clearly follows that he who is angry with another is not free from sin, even though he conceals his resentment; that he who gives indication of his wrath sins grievously; and that he who does not hesitate to treat another with harshness, and to utter contumelious reproaches against him, sins still more grievously.[10]

This, however, is to be understood of cases in which no just cause of anger exists. God and His laws permit us to be angry when we chastise the faults of those who are subject to us. For the anger of a Christian should spring from the Holy Spirit and not from the impulse of passion, seeing that we are called to be the temples of the Holy Ghost, in which Jesus Christ may dwell.[11]

Our Lord has left us many other lessons of instruction with regard to the perfect observance of this law, such as "Not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other. And if a man will contend with thee in judgment, and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him; and whosoever will force thee one mile, go with him two." [12]

[9] Matt. v. 22. on anger see Basil., hom. 10; Chrysost., hom. 29. ad pop. Antioch; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., quæst. 108 throughout.

[10] Aug. de serm. Dom. in monte, lib. 1; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae, q. 158. a. 3.

[11] 1 Cor. vi. 19.

[12] Matt. v. 39. See Aug., epist. 5. ad Mar.; de serm. Domini in monte, lib. 2. c. 20.

REMEDIES AGAINST THE VIOLATION OF THIS COMMANDMENT

From what has been said, it is easy to see how inclined man is to those sins which are prohibited by this Commandment, and how many are guilty of murder, if not in fact, at least in desire. As, then, the Sacred Scriptures prescribe remedies for so dangerous a disease, the pastor should spare no pains in making them known to the faithful.

Of these remedies the most efficacious is to form a just conception of the wickedness of murder. The enormity of this sin is manifest from many and weighty passages of Holy Scripture. So much does God abominate homicide that He declares that of the very beast of the field He will exact vengeance for the life of man, commanding the beast that injures man to be put to death.[13] And if the Almighty commanded man to abstain from the use of blood, he did so for no other reason than to impress on his mind the obligation of entirely refraining, both in act and desire, from the enormity of homicide.

The murderer is the worst enemy of his species, and consequently of nature. To the utmost of his power, he destroys the universal work of God by the destruction of man, since God declares that He created all things for man's sake. Nay, as it is forbidden in Genesis to take human life, because God created man to His own image and likeness, he who destroys God's image offers great injury to God, and almost seems to lay violent hands on God Himself! David, thinking of this with a mind divinely illumined, complained bitterly of the bloodthirsty in these words: "Their feet are swift to shed blood."[14] He does not simply say, "they kill," but, "they shed blood," words which serve to mark the enormity of that execrable crime and to denote the barbarous cruelty of the murderer. With a view also to describe in particular how the murderer is precipitated by the impulse of the devil into the commission of such an enormity, he says: "Their feet are swift."

[13] Gen. ix. 5, 6.
[14] Psalm xiii. 3.

Sermons

The Fifth Commandment

BY THE VERY REV. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.

THE LETTER AND THE SPIRIT

It is surely with careful paradox that our Lord bade His disciples have more justice than those whose very trade was justice. He chooses His words deliberately, and commands us to live the law better than they who are the men of the law. A lawyer is too much acquainted with law, its ins and outs, its anomalies, its narrowness and curious elasticity, its inability at times to touch the real criminal, and its having to be content with his catspaw, the methods of evading and eluding it and escaping its machinery, he is too much acquainted with its turns and shifts not to be tempted at times to live by its letter as against its spirit. This result of professionalism is not merely the danger of the lawyer, for to the priest no less it is an ever present menace. He knows only too well that, when he is answering the questions of others as to what is lawful, he may be giving himself also a lower standard than what is expedient. A man may be allowed to do one thing, and yet it may be better for him, finer, to do another. A priest has so frequently to acknowledge to his questioners that some particular course is allowable, that he may end by counselling it to himself. It is the menace of all professionalism to hold to literal interpretation, by petty and narrow traditions, and to miss the real spirit, wide and alive. Just as our Lord found it and denounced it in His own time. The story of the Good Samaritan was a parable to show how the priest and levite obeyed the letter but not the spirit of the law; the Pharisee was shown repeatedly how actually in adopting some traditions he was violating others; the scribe or lawyer is here told that his law is often no real law and his justice is blind justice, prejudiced, narrow, one-sided, unfair.

SINS AGAINST THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

Our Lord takes as His instance of this the fifth Commandment: *Thou shalt not kill.* Now it evidently was the custom of the scribes to leave the matter there and to hold rigorously by the literal reading of the law, to forbid all killing indeed, but to make it the sole thing forbidden. They forbade the act, but did not forbid those things that led up to the act; viz., the sins of speech, of thought, the quick judgments, the angry words. When, therefore, we consider the fifth Commandment we have to take as our first set of sins forbidden (1) sins of thought. We can, as we know, be uncharitable in thought. We can be quick to form judgments without sufficient evidence, to determine who is responsible for something wrong which has been done, to accuse people to ourselves or others on mere suspicion, to see or hear of something wrongly done and know who has done it and to attribute to him some evil motive. We can be perfectly justified always in denouncing things ill done, but not in being able to say the motive that possessed the man who did it. Sometimes it has happened that we have done things we found afterwards to be wrong, but have done them in good faith for a good motive. What we have done, certainly others can do. We can judge deeds, but not men, their works, but not their guilt, for it is the motive, not the action, that determines the moral value of anything done, and this motive must always elude us. (2) Sins of word are committed when in our anger we bandy accusations about, calling men names to stir up in turn their anger. "Big words break no bones," says the proverb; but they break the peace, and break men's hearts. It is not sufficient to forbid killing; one must first prevent oneself from uttering an angry word. There have been "pacificists" who denounced war and yet let themselves be unbridled in their accusations of corruption, of evil and unworthy motives, against men in high places: "unless your justice abound more than that of the scribes and pharisees, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." (3) Sins in deed are acts of violence done in unrighteous anger that physically affect our neighbor directly or indirectly. By

this then, murder, mutilation, injuries, damage to property or life, are forbidden: except they be done by public authority for grave and just reasons. The Church allows that capital punishment is lawful: but the crime must be gravely harmful to the common weal to warrant it, and even then it is not always expedient. Expedience depends on times, tempers, changing manners, the proved value of it as a deterrent, etc.

WAR

Self-murder and mutilation, directly and deliberately intended, are also comprehended under the heading of the fifth Commandment: but war is not necessarily included. War is simply a particular form of the employment of physical force by public authority. Physical force is certainly permitted to the state for the restraint of the guilty and the defence of the innocent. The "policeman" has always been recognized by the Church of Christ, though society would be in a better state if he could be successfully dispensed with. To restrain the guilty is certainly allowed to a third party, even though the victim himself follow the precept of Christ and turn the other cheek. If I see a child brutally struck, I can threaten force to prevent a repetition of the blow, and follow threats by active interference. That is the principle applied by nations to war. A people has the right to threaten injustice with physical restraints and to back up these threats with physical force. But since war carries in its train so many dreadful evils, it should never be lightly entered into. It cannot, of course, be used for purposes of aggression, it must only be in defence of justice. Moreover, the conditions laid down by the Church are threefold: (a) the purpose must be very grave, (b) all other means of settlement must have been honestly tried, (c) there must be every reasonable hope of success, so that the evils that follow shall not outweigh the good. These conditions apply equally to civil war and to wars of liberation. In all these matters, whether of war or punishment, it is the public authority alone that can move.

Anger

BY THE RIGHT REV. H. T. HENRY, LITT.D.

Whoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment.—Matt. v. 22.

INTRODUCTION

That wondrous brotherhood which Christ had founded—a brotherhood derived from the fact that we all are, through Christ, sons of the one Heavenly Father, and co-heirs with Christ of the Kingdom of God, obliges us to be merciful to those who offend us, not to render evil for evil, insult for insult, but, on the contrary, blessing for insult or injury; to seek peace and pursue it, doing always the works that indicate peace in the heart.

Now the great enemy of this Christian peace and mutual love is the sin of anger; and it is not surprising that we should find our Saviour severely denouncing that sin. How gentle He was to the sins and frailties of mankind; and yet He uttered terrible threats against those who offend against their neighbors by anger, insult, contumely. Why is this? Simply because the New Law brought to earth by Christ was a law of love. We know that the First Commandment of that Law is that we must love God with our whole heart, with our whole soul, with all our mind and strength; and we know that the second, the lesser Commandment, is that we must love our neighbor with a love like that which we have for ourself. At first, as we read the pages of the Gospels, it may appear strange to us that Christ should seem almost to forget the great First Commandment, in His engrossing eagerness to insist on the Second Commandment of that Law—that we must love our neighbor. And yet it is not strange; and St. Paul understood spiritual things clearly when he uttered the grand thought, that "whosoever loveth his neighbor hath fulfilled the Law!"

And who is my neighbor? In the parable of the Good Samaritan, our Saviour shows us that the word "neighbor"

includes all men, even those who are alien to us in nationality, in creed, in politics, in business, in social life. He Himself gives us the finishing touch to the wonderful picture of love, by praying on the Cross for those who had nailed Him to it. Indeed, the whole human race was His enemy by the fall of the first parent, and yet Divine Love sought out that enemy and died for its salvation.

MEANING OF ANGER

Since our Lord has denounced so severely the sin of anger, it is necessary for us to know what it is and what it is not.

Anger is an affection or sentiment of our nature, and, like the sentiment of love, may be turned either to good or to bad ends, in proportion as we subject it to reason, or allow it to go beyond the bounds of reasonable activity. Thus, for instance, we should love our children, but we should not allow our love for them to blind us to their faults, or to relieve them from the punishment which is necessary to train our children aright. So we should be angry at injustice, we should be indignant at outrage, but we must not allow our anger to go to undue lengths. There is, then, an anger which is proper and reasonable, for it stimulates us to resist injustice, to perform our duty in correcting those who are placed under our jurisdiction, to arouse public sentiment against public dishonor, to defend our civil rights, to preserve our native land from the ravages of a foreign foe or a domestic enemy. It is proper for us to reflect on this fact, because some parents may neglect to correct the faults of their children, some citizens may regard with indifference the scandals or municipal extravagances which it is their duty to protest against, and these parents or citizens may consider themselves models of meekness when, in fact, they are merely examples of torpidity and lazy-mindedness. It is quite easy, in the modern vulgar phrase, to "go along" with civic corruption, to tolerate low standards of commercial life, to condone or even to abet the insolence of our children towards those not of our own household. But it requires the stimulus of a just anger to make

our reproofs of all these faults properly felt by the offenders. Let us not, brethren, confound laziness and slothfulness and unwillingness to give offence with the sublime virtue of meekness.

To understand all this more clearly and vividly, we may consider some appropriate scriptural examples. We know that our Saviour was a perfect model of meekness. We know that, infinite God though He was, He nevertheless emptied Himself of His Majesty, He forgot the veneration due to His awful sacredness, in order that He might show us how to walk in His footsteps, how to be, like him, meek and humble of heart. We know that, when the time He had appointed for His great Sacrifice came at length, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and was dumb as a lamb before the shearer." Yet it was this same Divine Lord who gave us an example of just indignation when, entering the synagogue on a certain Sabbath day, He saw a man with a withered hand, and in mercy determined to heal the cripple. And the crowd "watched Him," says St. Mark (iii. 2-5), "whether He would heal on the Sabbath day, that they might accuse Him." And He said to the man who had the withered hand: "Stand up in the midst. And He said to them: Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath day, or to do evil? to save life or to destroy? But they held their peace." Thus St. Mark describes with dramatic brevity and vividness, the sullen, suspicious, unfriendly attitude of the enemies of Christ. They should have fallen at His divine feet in adoration, but they are watching how they may accuse Him. And our Lord, says the Evangelist, "looking round about on them with anger, being grieved for the blindness of their hearts," cured the cripple, even on the Sabbath day. Our Lord was indignant that they should have taken occasion of an act of mercy towards a suffering fellowman, to seek how they might accuse the Great Physician.

But perhaps a still more striking example of His splendid indignation was given when, entering the Temple at Jerusalem, He found that His Father's House, which should be only a house of prayer, had been turned, by a certain portion of the Jewish population, into what He so terribly described as a

"den of thieves." We know how the glowing indignation that shone from His face so cowed the money-changers in the Temple, that they offered no resistance as, with a whip of knotted cords, He drove them from the Temple and overthrew their tables.

Another example of indignation—and this time against a personal affront—is found in the case of St. Paul, that man amongst men, when he stood accused before the council of the Jews. With great dignity he offered his defence: "Men, brethren," he said, "I have conversed with all good conscience before God, until this present day." Surely this was a proper statement to make. But, with cruel injustice, the high-priest Ananias "commanded them that stood by him to strike him on the mouth. Then Paul said to him: God shall strike thee, thou whited wall. For sittest thou to judge me according to the law, and contrary to the law commandest me to be struck? And they that stood by said: Dost thou revile the high-priest of God? And Paul said: I knew not, brethren, that he is the high-priest. For it is written: Thou shalt not speak evil of the prince of thy people" (Acts xxiii. 1-5). What a fine lesson this is of righteous indignation at the cruel injustice shown to a prisoner by a judge, and at the same time of a proper apology offered for his ignorance that the judge was also a high-priest of the Jewish religion! To a judge, St. Paul's answer was just; but to a high-priest, it lacked the respect which the law commanded should be shown to a prince of the Jewish people. St. Paul was ignorant of the personality of the judge, and, on learning it, made proper amends. His indignation was perfectly under the control of his reason.

These illustrations show us that there are times when we may be justly angry; for instance, when the honor of God is assailed, as by the money-changers in the Temple; or when the just interests of our neighbor are at stake, as in the case of the cripple; or when a personal injustice is done to us, as in the case of St. Paul before the council of the Jews.

In what, then, does the *sin* of anger consist? It consists in an inordinate desire of revenge, and is found when our anger seeks an object that did not give the offence, or visits the

offender with an undue retribution, or inflames our souls immoderately, or breaks out into clamors, gestures, opprobrious epithets, cutting speeches, and other signs of an animal passion that has gone beyond the just bounds of reason.

With respect to the words of our Lord in to-day's Gospel, which apportion the same punishment to anger as to murder, it is only necessary to point to the fact that the law of God is here shown as reaching down to the intentions of the heart as well as to the outward actions of which men can judge. For it is true that the anger which seeks an outlet in murder or in some grave mutilation of an offender, or in some grave injury to his reputation or worldly possessions, is, like murder itself, a mortal sin. But I should think that this terrible sin of anger is very rare, indeed, amongst you, my brethren in Christ, if indeed it be found at all in a Christian who is giving even a slight care to his eternal salvation.

The anger to which most Christians are inclined, is an irritability arising from the many cares of modern life—cares of the household, of business details, of the hurry and bustle of life as it is lived to-day. It shows itself in impatient words and gestures, angry looks and heated words, and does not, as a rule, last long. Such anger is venial in its nature, and should not prevent us from approaching the Holy Table, although, of course, we should strive to conquer our impatience and govern our temper with greater care. However, parents, and, in general, those who are in authority, should especially strive to avoid unseemly anger, even where punishment should be meted out to an offender, lest scandal be given; for if we cannot govern ourselves, with what propriety shall we undertake to govern others? But most particularly we must avoid harsh and biting speeches and, of course, vulgar epithets. Neither must we brood over real or fancied grievances, as this will produce a more or less permanent feeling of resentment, with resulting coldness, lessening of fraternal charity, and sadness of heart.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE SIN OF ANGER

How shall we guard ourselves against inordinate anger? First of all, our human reason will show us its danger in many ways. Physicians will echo the warning of Sacred Scripture, that "anger shorteneth a man's days." That turbulence of passion which draws the blood suddenly to the heart, and then sends it pulsing rapidly to the head, that nervous agitation that excites the whole physical frame, that clouding of the intelligence by heavy mists of feeling, can not be wholesome in respect of health. Reason will also open to us the pages of history, and show that inordinate anger is often responsible for the political murder of one nation by another, for the suicide of states rent by faction and anarchy, for the severing of family ties and the scattering of brethren who should have dwelt in unity. This terrible story of the ravages of immoderate anger is repeated again and again in the annals of our race. Perhaps the traditions handed down in your own family circle will offer some dark chapters of lamentable discord and division due to the long resentments born of anger. And then the current history of the world, reflected partially in the daily newspaper—what a loathsome recital we have there of the results of anger, in so many physical maimings, bloody encounters, so many divorces, so many murders and suicides! These lessons of history may even find some sort of repetition in our own experience, in the breaking of tender and old-time friendships, in plighted troths given to the wind, in many family quarrelings, in sullen resentments, in heart-burnings, perhaps even in hatreds! Finally, Revelation shows us how God looks upon this sin of anger; and terrible as are the natural results of its fury, still more dreadful are the punishments it will meet with in the supernatural order; for even a venial sin of anger merits great punishments from Almighty God, while the mortal sin of anger merits eternal hell.

REMEDIES AGAINST ANGER

While, as I have pointed out, the anger which ordinarily careful Christians may be guilty of is usually venial in its

character, and should not prevent them from receiving Holy Communion frequently through any misapprehension as to its grade of sinfulness, still we should earnestly strive so to master our tendency towards immoderate anger, that we shall always be able to control it, even under great provocation. We should, therefore, cultivate the opposite virtue of meekness, which does not mean insensibility to irritation, or an easy-going disposition, but means positive strength of character, or the ability to suffer in patience that which may nevertheless move us powerfully to revenge. One interesting illustration of the strength of character implied in the virtue of meekness, is furnished by the life-history of the great opponent of the Turks in the fifteenth century, the illustrious Scanderbeg, King of Albania. In that century the Turks, under Mahomet II, again and again menaced the Christianity of Europe by wars of invasion and conquest. But again and again they were heroically repulsed by Scanderbeg with much smaller armies. One historian declares that "there appeared in Scanderbeg something almost above human nature; and it is certain that very few generals have been equal to him in firmness of mind, strength of body, heroic valor, and brilliant success. He gained twenty-two victories over the Ottomans, whilst they were in the height of their power and under the most terrible of their sultans. . . . He not only displayed the intrepidity of a warrior, and the talents of a consummate general, but also practiced the social and Christian virtues in a high degree of perfection. Most historians represent him as the mildest of men; and yet, such was the struggle within him whenever he met with great opposition, that his lower lip would split and bleed; whence we may conclude that, as he was naturally much inclined to anger, his great mildness must have been the effect of a sublime virtue, and of an extraordinary violence which he offered to himself" (Fredet's "Modern History," 1877, p. 342). Meekness, then, does not mean weakness, but rather strength of character, and shines with the brightest luster in strong men and noble characters.

Humility, too, is a safeguard against anger, partly because much of our proneness to indignation arises from over-sensi-

tiveness and too great self-appreciation, and partly because the humble of heart can recognize their own sinfulness and are not, therefore, over-exacting with respect to their neighbor.

A just recognition of the fact that inordinate anger is a shameful sign of our own weakness of will should be a powerful natural safeguard against anger. A truly strong man governs an unruly steed, and is not carried whithersoever that lower animal nature would carry the rider. And, indeed, which one of us, in regarding the raging anger of another, does not immediately perceive the dishonoring and indecent character of the exhibition poor human nature is making of itself? That ugly picture which you are looking at, is a mirror in which you may see clearly your own features in any outburst of immoderate anger.

The thought, too, that unrestrained anger may result in other most horrible sins—veritable murders, and grave sins of hatred, and horrible cursings, blasphemies, imprecations—this should make us fear the growth of anger in us and lead us to every precaution possible to avoid such a possible outcome of ungoverned passion.

Finally, there is the contemplation of our Divine Model, the God-Man, Christ Jesus, who bids us learn of Him, Who is meek and humble of heart, how to suffer with patience the evils of our life, the offences of our brethren, the misunderstandings of our friends, the guile and misrepresentation of our enemies. Remembering that we can do all things in Him Who strengtheneth us, let us make the constant companion of our hearts, the frequent prayer of our lips, that sweet aspiration to which Holy Church has attached an indulgence: "Jesus, meek and humble of heart, make my heart like unto Thine!"

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SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

BAPTISM: ITS RITES AND CEREMONIES

TEXT

All who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his death. For we are buried together with him by baptism into death, that as Christ is risen from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also may walk in newness of life.—Rom. vi. 3, 4.

Analysis

Introduction. In the early days of the Church Baptism was generally administered by immersion. The whole person, even his head, was submerged in the water. It is to this rite of Baptism that St. Paul refers in to-day's Epistle. The descent into the water and the submersion of the person baptized fittingly represented the death and burial of our Lord; while the coming out of the water signified His coming forth from the tomb. This symbolism is also preserved in Baptism by pouring, since the person's head is lowered over the font, is covered with water, and then raised again.

It is of great benefit and importance to understand the meaning of the ceremonies that accompany the administration of solemn Baptism, because these holy rites have come down to

us from the Apostles, and are intended to bring before our mind the gifts and graces which the Sacrament confers.

I. **The ceremonies of Baptism that are observed before arriving at the font.** 1. Special water for Baptism is consecrated on the eves of the great feasts of Easter and Pentecost. 2. The person to be baptized is first brought to the door of the Church, to signify that he has not yet been admitted into the house of God. 3. The subject is then catechized by the priest in the principal doctrines of the Christian faith. 4. Next follows the exorcism, consisting of prayers to expel the devil. 5. Finally, salt is placed in the subject's mouth, he is signed with the Sign of the Cross, and his nostrils and ears are touched with spittle. The salt signifies deliverance from the corruption of sin and a relish for good works; the Sign of the Cross means that the senses of the subject are strengthened to enable him to know and observe God's Commandments; the spittle recalls the action of our Lord in restoring sight to the blind man whom He commanded to go and wash in the waters of Siloe (John ix. 7), and represents the power of Baptism to admit the light of faith to the soul.

II. **The ceremonies performed at the font.** 1. The baptized person renounces Satan with all his works and pomps, i.e., sin and those maxims of the world that are contrary to the Gospel. 2. The subject is anointed with the oil of Catechumens on the breast, that he may receive faith, and on the shoulders that he may engage in good works. 3. The subject then makes profession of faith in the Articles of the Creed. 4. Lastly the subject declares his willingness to receive the Sacrament and is baptized.

III. **The ceremonies that follow the administration of Baptism.** 1. The crown of the subject's head is anointed with chrism to give him to understand that he is now a Christian—the word *Christ* signifies *anointed*. 2. The subject receives a white garment or cloth, which signifies the glory of the resurrection to which we are born again by Baptism, and the beauty of

soul which this Sacrament confers. 3. Then a burning light is given to the subject to show that the faith received in Baptism, inflamed by charity, should be increased by good works. 4. A name is given in Baptism, which should be the name of a saint, in order to place the subject under the care of that saint, and to animate him to imitate the saint's example.

Exhortation. 1. When witnessing solemn Baptism we should reflect upon the rich meaning of the ceremonies and the graces which they symbolize. 2. When Baptism has been administered privately the solemn ceremonies should afterwards be supplied. 3. We should always remember that through Baptism we have died to sin and risen again with Christ to newness of life.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

The Ceremonies of Baptism

It now remains to explain, clearly and concisely, what regards the prayers, rites, and ceremonies of this Sacrament (Baptism). To rites and ceremonies may, in some measure, be applied what the Apostle says of the gift of tongues, that it is unprofitable to speak, unless he who hears understands.[1] They present an image, and convey the signification of the things that are done in the Sacrament; but if the people do not understand the force and meaning of these signs, there is but little advantage derived from ceremonies. To make them understood, therefore, and to impress the minds of the faithful with a conviction that, although ceremonies are not of absolute necessity, they are of very great importance and deserve great veneration, are matters which solicit the zeal and industry of the pastor. This, the authority of those by whom they were instituted, who were, no doubt, the Apostles, and also the object of their institution, sufficiently prove. It is manifest that ceremonies contribute to the more religious and holy administration of the Sacraments, serve to exhibit to the eyes of the beholder a lively picture of the exalted and inestimable

[1] 1 Cor. xiv. 2.

gifts which they contain, and impress on the minds of the faithful a deeper sense of the boundless beneficence of God.[2]

THREE CLASSES OF CEREMONIES IN BAPTISM

In order that the pastor's instructions may follow a certain order, and that the people may find it easier to remember his words, all the ceremonies and prayers which the Church uses in the administration of Baptism are to be reduced to three heads. The first comprehends such as are observed before coming to the baptismal font; the second, such as are used at the font; the third, those that immediately follow the administration of the Sacrament.

I. THE CEREMONIES THAT ARE OBSERVED BEFORE COMING TO THE FONT: THE CONSECRATION OF THE WATER

In the first place, then, the water to be used in Baptism should be previously prepared. The baptismal font is consecrated with the oil of mystic unction; but this cannot be done at all times, but, according to ancient usage, only on certain feasts, which are justly deemed the greatest and the most holy solemnities in the year. The water at Baptism was consecrated on the vigils of those feasts; and on those days alone, except in cases of necessity, it was the practice of the ancient Church to administer Baptism.[3] But although the Church, on account of the dangers to which life is continually exposed, has deemed it expedient to change her discipline in this respect, she still observes with the greatest solemnity the festivals of Easter and Pentecost on which the baptismal water is to be consecrated.

THE PERSON TO BE BAPTIZED STANDS AT THE CHURCH DOOR

After the consecration of the water the other ceremonies that precede Baptism are next to be explained. The person to

[2] On this subject see Dion., cap. 2. de Eccles. Hier.; Clem., Epist. 3; Tertul., ilb. de corona milit.; de baptism. passim; Origen., hom. 12. in Num.; Cypr., Epist. 70; de consecr. dist. 4.

[3] Cypr., epist. 70; Basil., de Spiritu S., c. 27; de consec. dist. 4. c. in Sabbato.

be baptized is brought or conducted to the door of the church and is forbidden to enter, as unworthy to be admitted into the house of God, until he has cast off the yoke of the most degrading servitude, devoted himself unreservedly to Christ and His most just authority.[4]

CATECHETICAL INSTRUCTION

The priest then asks what he demands of the Church; and having received the answer, he first instructs him in the doctrines of the Christian faith, of which a profession is to be made in Baptism.[5] This the priest does in a brief catechetical instruction, a practice which originated, no doubt, in the precept of our Lord, addressed to His Apostles: "Go ye into the whole world, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."[6] From this command we may learn that Baptism is not to be administered until, at least, the principal truths of religion are explained. But as the catechetical form consists of question and answer; if the person to be instructed be an adult, he himself answers; if an infant, the sponsor answers and makes the solemn promise for him.

THE EXORCISM

The exorcism comes next in order. It consists of words of sacred and religious import, and of prayers, and is used to expel the devil, to weaken and crush his power.

THE SALT

To the exorcism are added other ceremonies, each of which, being mystical, has its own clear signification.[7] When, for instance, salt is put into the mouth of the person to be bap-

[4] Tertul., de corona milit. c. 3; Cyril, of Jerusalem, Catech. 8.
[5] Clem. Rom. epist. 3. Aug. de fide et oper. c. 9.
[6] Mark xvi. 15; Matth. xxviii. 19, 20.
[7] On exorcisms see Tertul., de prescript. c. 41; Cypr., epist. 2; Aug., lib. 2. de gratia Dei et peccat. orig., cap. 40; lib. 2. de Nupt. et concupis., cap. 26; Optat, lib. 4. contra Parmenianum

tized, it evidently means that by the doctrines of faith and by the gift of grace he shall be delivered from the corruption of sin, shall experience a relish for good works, and shall be nurtured with the food of divine wisdom.[8]

THE SIGN OF THE CROSS

Next his forehead, eyes, breast, shoulders, ears, are signed with the Sign of the Cross, to declare, that by the mystery of Baptism, the senses of the person baptized are opened and strengthened, to enable him to receive God, and to understand and observe His Commandments.[9]

THE SALIVA

His nostrils and ears are next touched with spittle, and he is then immediately admitted to the baptismal font. By this ceremony we understand that, as sight was given to the blind man mentioned in the Gospel, whom the Lord after He had spread clay on his eyes, commanded to wash them in the waters of Siloe,[10] so the efficacy of holy Baptism, a light is let in on the mind, which enables it to discern heavenly truth.[11]

2. THE CEREMONIES OBSERVED AFTER COMING TO THE FONT

After the performance of these ceremonies the person to be baptized approaches the baptismal font, at which are performed other rites and ceremonies which present a summary of the obligations imposed by the Christian religion.

THE RENUNCIATION OF SATAN

Three distinct times the person to be baptized is asked by the priest: "Dost thou renounce Satan, and all his works, and all his

[8] Bed. in lib. 1 Esdræ. c. 9; Isid., lib. 2. de offic. eccl., c. 20; Aug., lib. 1. confess., c. 11.

[9] On the Sign of the Cross see Tertul., lib. de resurr. carn.; Basil., lib. de spiritu Sancto; Chrys., contra gentes et alios.

[10] John ix. 7.

[11] On this rite see Am., lib. 1. de sacram. c. 1; de iis qui myst. init. c. 1; de consecr., distinct. 4, c. postea.

pomps?" To each of which he, or the sponsor in his name, replies in the affirmative. Whoever, then, purposes to enlist, under the standard of Christ, must, first of all, enter into a sacred and solemn engagement to renounce the devil and the world, and always to hold them in utter detestation as his worst enemies.[12]

THE ANOINTING WITH OIL OF CATECHUMENS

He is next anointed with the oil of catechumens on the breast and between the shoulders. He is anointed on the breast to show that through the gift of the Holy Ghost he may lay aside error and ignorance, and receive the true faith, for "the just man liveth by faith";[13] on the shoulders, that by the grace of the Holy Spirit he may be enabled to shake off negligence and sloth and engage actively in the performance of good works, for "faith without works is dead."[14]

THE PROFESSION OF FAITH

Next, standing at the baptismal font, he is interrogated by the priest in these words: "Dost thou believe in God, the Father Almighty?" To which he answers: "I believe." Being similarly questioned on the remaining Articles of the Creed, he solemnly professes his faith. These two promises contain, it is clear, the sum and substance of the law of Christ.[15]

THE WISH TO BE BAPTIZED

When Baptism is now about to be administered, the priest asks the candidate if he wishes to be baptized. After an answer in the affirmative has been given by him, or, if he is an infant, by the sponsor, the priest performs the salutary ablution, "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." As man, by yielding the assent of his will to

[12] Tertul., lib. de coron. mil. c. 13; de spectac. c. 4; de Idol. c. 6; Cypr., epist. 7. 54.
[13] Gal. iii. 11.
[14] James ii. 26. Note.—In some editions of the Roman Catechism this paragraph is not found.
[15] Cyril. Hier. Catech. 2 et 3.

the wicked suggestions of Satan, fell under a just sentence of condemnation; so God will have none enrolled in the number of His soldiers but those whose service is voluntary, that by a willing obedience to His commands they may obtain eternal salvation.

3. THE CEREMONIES THAT FOLLOW BAPTISM: CHRISM

After the person has been baptized, the priest anoints the crown of his head with chrism, thus giving him to understand, that from the moment of his Baptism, he is united as a member to Christ, His head, and ingrafted on His body, and that he is, therefore, called a Christian from Christ, as Christ is so called from Chrism. What the Chrism signifies, the prayers offered by the priest, as St. Ambrose observes, sufficiently explain.[16]

THE WHITE GARMENT

On the person baptized the priest then puts a white garment, saying: "Receive this white garment, which mayest thou carry unstained before the judgment-seat of our Lord Jesus Christ; that thou mayest have eternal life." Instead of a white garment, infants, because not formally dressed, receive a white cloth, accompanied by the same words. According to the teaching of the Fathers this symbol signifies the glory of the resurrection to which we are born by Baptism, the brightness and beauty with which the soul, when purified from the stains of sin, is invested, and the innocence and integrity which the person who has received Baptism, should preserve throughout life.[17]

THE LIGHTED CANDLE

A lighted taper is then put into the hand of the baptized, to signify that faith, inflamed by charity, which is received in Baptism, is to be fed and augmented by the exercise of good works.

[16] Lib. 1. de Sacram.; Dionys., Eccl. Hierar. c. 3.; Cyril. of Jer., Catech. 3; Basil., lib. de Spiritu Sancto, c. 27.
[17] Dionys., l. c.; Amb., de iis qui myst. init. c. 8.

THE NAME GIVEN IN BAPTISM

Finally, a name is given the person baptized. It should be taken from some person whose eminent sanctity has given him a place in the catalogue of the Saints. The similarity of name will stimulate each one to imitate the virtues and holiness of the Saint, and, moreover, to hope and pray that he who is the model for his imitation will also be his advocate, and watch over the safety of his body and soul.

Hence we cannot mark in terms too strong our disapprobation of the conduct of those who search for the names of heathens, and what is still worse, of monsters of iniquity to bestow upon their children. By such conduct they practically prove how little they regard Christian piety when they so fondly cherish the memory of impious men, as to wish to have their profane names continually echo in the ears of the faithful.

RECAPITULATION

This exposition of Baptism,[18] if given by the pastor, will be found to embrace almost every thing of importance which regards this Sacrament. We have explained the meaning of the word "baptism," its nature and substance, and also the parts of which it is composed. We have said by whom it was instituted; who are the ministers necessary to its administration; who should be, as it were, the tutors, whose instructions should sustain the weakness of the person baptized; to whom Baptism should be administered, and how they should be disposed; what are the virtue and efficacy of the Sacrament; finally, we have developed, at sufficient length, the rites and ceremonies that should accompany its administration. The pastor will recollect that the chief purpose of all these instructions is to induce the faithful to direct their constant attention and solicitude to the fulfilment of the promises so sacredly made at Baptism, and to lead lives not unworthy of the sanctity that should accompany the name and profession of a Christian.

[18] On this rite see Gregor. Nazian., serm. 15 de bapt.; Gregor. of Tours, lib. 5, cap. 11; Niceph., Hist. Eccle., lib. 3. c. 12.

Sermon

Baptism

BY THE REV. W. LIEBER

But ye are washed, but ye are sanctified.—1 Cor. vi. 11.

CEREMONIES IN GENERAL

In the administration of the Sacraments, the Catholic Church makes use of forms and rites for the purpose either of better showing forth her faith and worship as in the case of holy Mass, or of exhibiting the dignity and the effects of the Sacraments when they are administered, the better to dispose the recipients by exciting greater attention and devotion.

Ceremonies are as old as the world. They are outward expressions of inward feelings. Man is a compound being; he is composed of soul and body; he must needs give utterance to his sentiments by outward gestures. There are few nations that do not supplement their language by some gestures. Some are even bound to have recourse to them, because of the poverty of their language. Our separated brethren who so greatly object to our ritual, as formalism, seem to be forgetful of the fact that all functions, both lay and clerical, are made up of ceremonies. What are our military parades, our presentations at court, our openings of Parliament, our patriotic rejoicings, but ceremonies? Why should they be deemed necessary at court, in society, in the army, in the masonic lodge, and rejected from public worship? Is it fair on the part of our non-Catholic friends, who approve of worldly forms and ceremonies for which they often cannot see the "raison d'être," to denounce our ritual as silly and superstitious, when they have not the slightest knowledge of its inward signification? Why, in our rites there is not a sign or gesture made, or action performed, but has its meaning and symbolism to the initiated.

From the beginning ceremonies have especially been used in connection with divine worship. We read in the Bible of the offerings and sacrifices of the patriarchs of old, and in the book of Exodus, Numbers and Leviticus, we read of the minute ceremonial and ritual of Moses sanctioned by the Almighty. We further learn that Christ did not condemn outward ceremonial. He not only attended the sacrifices and other holy functions in the Temple, but practiced forms and ceremonies Himself, when curing the deaf and dumb and the blind, when commissioning His apostles, when prostrating Himself with His face to the ground before His eternal Father. Parts of these very ceremonies we find reproduced in the rites that precede Baptism, as we shall see presently.

CEREMONIES OF BAPTISM

Perhaps, with the exception of Holy Orders, the administration of no Sacrament is so elaborate as that of Baptism. The Church, no doubt, wishes thereby to impress the recipient and the attendants with the importance of this rite. It is the first and most necessary of the Sacraments, and therefore termed, sometimes, the "gate of all the Sacraments." It is the incorporation into the mystical body of Christ, the holy Catholic Church, and entitles us to participate in all the privileges of a Christian here on earth, and to look forward to the everlasting bliss of the Church triumphant in heaven.

However, in the administration of Baptism we must distinguish between that part of the rite which is essential for producing the effects of the Sacrament, and the added ceremonies performed by the priest, e.g., the use of blessed salt, the exorcisms, the manifold unctions and blessings prescribed by the rubrics. These ceremonies are omitted when Baptism is administered privately. Though not essential to the validity of the Sacrament, they are on no account to be suppressed in the solemn ministration. When omitted, in case of necessity, they ought to be supplied later on, if possible. The baptismal ceremonies are recommended as well by their venerable antiquity as by their imposing symbolism and majestic

wording. And, indeed, the apostolic constitutions, the oldest sacramentaries, the Fathers of the second and third centuries, mention them, not as rites that had been subsequently introduced, but as already observed in the primitive days of Christendom. Therefore, in suppressing them as superstitious, our separated brethren have thereby shown that their belief concerning this Sacrament of Regeneration has ceased to be what it used to be in the early ages of faith.

The baptismal ceremonial is evidently meant to give us Christians an exalted idea of the grace we receive through the Sacrament, and to impress upon us the grave obligations entailed upon the receiver of Baptism.

Let us, therefore, study as closely as we can, the ceremonies: first, those that precede; second, those that accompany; and, third, those that follow the solemn administration of this important Sacrament.

CEREMONIES BEFORE ADMINISTRATION

One of the chief requisites, before the solemn administration of Baptism, is the choice of sponsors, or god-parents.

They are called on, first, to answer, in the name of the baptized, to all the interrogations of Baptism; secondly, to be guardians of their spiritual life for the future. They used to be called "guarantors." As in the case of prudent men of business who, when appointing to responsible positions demand security, so the Church in the case of the baptismal obligations requires "guarantors" who will answer for the discharge of the obligations of the children to God in case the parents neglect their solemn duty. When the parents are practical Catholics, the sponsors may presume that due Christian education will be provided by the father and mother, who, of course, are primarily responsible; but be it well understood that when the parents fail in these religious duties, the office of the god-parent calls for action. The choice, therefore, of such persons is a serious consideration. They should be of the age of puberty, thorough Catholics, and willing to accept their responsibility. Next to a judicious choice of sponsors comes the

selection of a baptismal name to be given to the child, and the ritual recommends the parents to impose the name of a saint that the child may profit by his patronage and example.

The person to be baptized is kept in the porch of the church, or before the entrance of the baptistry, to signify that before being a Christian, he is not worthy to be admitted into the House of God. Having no right to enter heaven, he has no right to enter the church. The priest, robed in a surplice, whose whiteness is symbolic of the innocence he is going to impart, and a purple stole, the color used by the Church on days of sadness and mourning (pointing out the miserable state to which sin has reduced all children of Adam), goes forth to meet the candidate whom he addresses in the following words: "What dost thou ask of the Church of God?" The person to be baptized or the sponsor answers, "Faith," and the minister proceeds: "What does faith bring to thee?" "Life everlasting," is the reply. "If, then, thou desirest to enter life," continues the priest, "keep the Commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind; and thy neighbor as thyself."

Thereupon the priest breathes three times in the face of the candidate, while he orders Satan to withdraw and make place for the Holy Ghost, the Paraclete. St. Augustine refers to this ceremony as a proof against the Pelagians, of the existence of original sin, showing that even newborn infants are infected with it, and hence subject to the power of the devil, who, by the exorcism of the priest, is expelled.

From the outset these ceremonies tend to show our miserable state previous to our christening. We were all slaves of the devil, children of divine wrath. Admire, therefore, the power God has bestowed upon His priests in banishing Satan from our souls. The breath is symbolic of the breath of God in creation, when He animated the human body with the breath of life. In this first generation man received natural life "in animam viventem," but in this regeneration he receives a supernatural life, "in spiritum vivificantem." This breath is also symbolical of that of Christ breathing upon the Apostles

when commissioning them and empowering them to forgive sins "and when He had said this, He breathed on them and saith unto them, 'Receive ye the Holy Ghost.'" The priest then signs the candidate on forehead and breast with the Sign of the Cross, to demonstrate, first, that Baptism draws all its virtue and efficacy from the Passion and Cross of the Saviour; and, secondly, to signify that the recipient is consecrated to Jesus crucified, that, marked with this sign, he belongs henceforth to the flock of the Divine Pastor, whose voice and maxims he is to obey without ever heeding the strange doctrines of false prophets. As by the livery of a servant we get to know the master he serves, so by the Cross, which is the livery of the Christian, the world will know that he belongs to the divine Master, Christ Jesus. The Sign of the Cross is marked on the forehead to warn the Christian never to blush at being a disciple of Christ crucified. It is marked on the breast to show that he must love and embrace the Cross, that his life is not to be a life of pleasure, but a life of toil and suffering, and therefore should, like the Apostle, glory in nothing save in the Cross of Jesus. "But God forbid that I should glory save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. vi. 14).

After these Signs of the Cross, the minister continues praying for the catechumen, placing his hand upon his head to signify that he has become a victim to be consecrated to the Divinity. Then, having blessed some salt, which he places in the mouth of the child, the priest says: "Take the salt of wisdom, that the Lord may preserve thee and conduct thee to life eternal." Salt is the emblem of the purification from sin, for the priest begs God to preserve the child from all infection of vice, so that he may be disposed ever to receive more abundant graces. Blessed salt is given to convey the taste of spirituality, that the word of God may not prove insipid to the Christian, but that he may recognize by experience the sweetness of the Lord and of His service. Salt, again, is the symbol of wisdom, which is to direct the disciple of Christ in all his doings and impede him from acting foolishly or against the law of God. Lastly, this salt means that Baptism is the pledge of

a future glorious and incorruptible resurrection. The priest resumes the exorcism and commands Satan in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, to quit the soul of God's servant: "He that commands thee is the same that walked on the mighty deep and stretched out His hand to Peter about to perish in the waves. Hence acknowledge thy sentence, O, thou cursed one, return honor to the true and living God, render honor to Jesus Christ, His Son, and to the Holy Spirit; withdraw from this servant whom our Lord has deigned to call to the grace of Baptism." In concluding this prayer the priest again traces the shape of the Cross on the catechumen's head and adds: "And thou beware, cursed Satan, of ever having the audacity to violate this sign of the holy Cross which I impress upon his forehead."

This being done, the priest places a second time his hand upon the catechumen and begs of God, the author of light and truth, to let shine down upon him the light of heavenly knowledge to purify and sanctify him, in order that he may ever have a strong hope and right judgment, and follow the holy doctrine. Now, being no longer the property of the devil, but of God, he is introduced into the church by the priest, who, laying the end of his stole on the head of the catechumen, says: "Come into the temple of God, that thou mayest have part with Christ unto life everlasting," and as, according to St. Paul, "He that cometh to God must believe that He is" (Heb. xi. 6), the candidate or the sponsor on his behalf is requested to recite the Apostle's Creed, which, in former days, was expounded to the catechumens, who had to know and understand every article thereof ere they were admitted to the Sacrament. After the Creed, the Lord's Prayer is said, to show that it is only by the means of prayer that the Christian is able to live up to his belief. The priest, then, touching with his saliva the ears of the child, exclaims: "Ephpheta, be thou opened." This reminds us of a passage of St. Mark (vii. 33, 34), where it is said that when about to cure the deaf and dumb man, Christ "put His fingers into his ears, and spitting, He touched his tongue; and, looking up to heaven, He said: 'Ephpheta," which is 'Be thou opened.'" After this, the priest, touching the candidate's

nostrils, adds: "In the odor of sweetness." This rite means that the child must never close his ears to the promises of God, nor to His laws, nor to the evangelical counsels; that he must listen to the divine Word, and that his soul, as a docile lamb, must only know the voice of the divine Pastor. The nostrils are touched to show that the Christian must remain insensible to the infection and allurements of sin and perceive only the salutary odor of God, must become himself, in fact, the sweet fragrance of Jesus in inducing others to the practice of virtue by his good example. But among the ceremonies that accompany Baptism there is none so imposing as that of the baptismal vows or the renouncing of the devil, his works and pomps. From all the vows that are taken in after life we may obtain a dispensation, while no power in heaven or earth can dispense us from our baptismal vows. The first renouncing exacted is that of the devil; it is the renouncing of his power and tyranny, and the taking of Christ as our Master. No one can serve two masters, hence no one can be Christ's servant and at the same time a servant of the devil. The second is that of the devil's works, which is sin, especially that of pride, which changed the angel of light into an angel of darkness, and constitutes the root of all sins.

The third is that of the devil's pomps, all illicit desires, vanity, ambition, luxury, sensuality, and the pleasures of the world of which Satan is the prince. After this solemn declaration, the minister, dipping his finger in the oil of the catechumens, anoints the breast and shoulders of the child; the breast, to make it love the yoke of Christ; the shoulders, to give it strength to carry the yoke. This anointing is done with oil to denote the sweetness of this yoke. In fine, the Church requires of the candidate a solemn profession of his faith in the Trinity, the Incarnation, and the Church, this being intended to impress upon us the necessity of faith in those receiving the Sacrament, for he alone "that *believeth* and is baptized shall be saved." Further, in conformity with ancient discipline, not to give this Sacrament to adults unless they previously expressed the desire of receiving it, and also in imitation of our Lord, who, before healing the sick, asked if

they wished for recovery, the Church requires the minister to ascertain whether the candidate is willing to be baptized. The answer being given on behalf of the child, "I will," the priest pours water over the head of the candidate while pronouncing the words prescribed by Christ: "I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." To comply with the rubrics there should be physical contact during the pouring of the water between the sponsor and his godchild. The prevailing practice of actually placing the hand on the child is all that is required.

CEREMONIES AFTER BAPTISM

Immediately after Baptism the minister anoints with chrism the forehead of the new Christian, to signify, first, that he has become a member of Jesus Christ; and, secondly, to show that he has been elevated to the dignity both of king and priest; of king, to conquer the devil, the world and the flesh; of priest, to offer to God the sacrifice of his mind, heart and body. A white cloth is presently thrown over the neophyte by the priest, who says: "Receive this white garment and carry it without stain before the judgment seat of Jesus Christ." In the primitive Church the newly baptized were invested in a white garment, which they used to wear for a whole week. This cloth or garment is a symbol of the robe of innocence. A lighted candle is next handed to the person baptized or to the sponsor, while the priest utters these beautiful words: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy Baptism, so as to be without blame; keep the Commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials thou mayest meet Him in the company of the saints in the heavenly court, and have eternal life, and live for ever and ever. Amen." This lighted taper represents the theological virtues, which are infused by virtue of the Sacrament. The light is the symbol of faith; the heat denotes charity; and the flame itself speaks of hope aspiring after heaven. At the conclusion of the ceremony the priest dismisses the party with a valedictory blessing: "Go in peace and the Lord be with you."

CONCLUSION

Dear brethren, Baptism, along with all the rites, the blessings and vows I have explained, will not suffice for your salvation unless you remain faithful to the obligations you have assumed. Remember, then, the covenant that was sealed between you and your God on the day of your christening. Be true to your word, and renew your baptismal vows from time to time. Be ever mindful of your dignity as Christians in the midst of the temptations of this world, "but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." Amen.

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SEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE SIN OF HYPOCRISY

TEXT

Beware of false prophets, who come to you in the clothing of sheep, but inwardly they are ravening wolves: By their fruits you shall know them.—MATT. vii. 15, 16.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. After our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount had outlined the teachings that were to be characteristic of His

Kingdom, He proceeded to admonish His hearers against false teachers, who have every external appearance of truth and righteousness, but are inwardly filled with lies and deception. In speaking these warning words our divine Saviour had chiefly in mind the Pharisees who were scattered throughout Palestine, and who, while pretending to be the faithful expounders of God's revelation to His chosen people, were in reality often teaching the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. xv. 9). Although our Lord's words are directly expressed against those who teach false doctrines, they are hardly less applicable to those who are given to the vice of hypocrisy. A hypocrite is, in fact, a false teacher, because he pretends to be what he is not; oftentimes he is a wolf in sheep's clothing, assuming the appearance of virtue and religion, and under their pleasing guise carrying out his own nefarious purposes. The condemnation which the Saviour pronounced against false teachers was not more severe than that which He frequently uttered against hypocrites. Let us therefore consider the baneful vice of hypocrisy.

I. **The nature of hypocrisy.** 1. This vice is a species of simulation or deceitfulness in act by which a person seeks to lead others into error. Hypocrisy implies two things: (a) that a person is really wicked; (b) that through vain glory he attempts to gain the reputation of virtue. 2. There are various ways of being guilty of this sin: (a) by pretending to possess virtues which one does not possess, *e.g.,* the Pharisees gave alms in public, but were secretly avaricious and oppressors of the poor; (b) by vilifying and criticising others in order to gain the reputation of being conscientious and observant, *e.g.,* those who see the mote in their brother's eye, but neglect the beam in their own (Matt. vii. 3–5); (c) by endeavoring to give even to one's vices the appearance of virtuous deeds, *e.g.,* the Pharisees who tried to conceal their pride and arrogance, and hatred of Christ and His miracles under the cloak of truth and zeal for the Law; (d) by attempting so to magnify one's seeming or slight virtues as to make them appear extraordinary; (e) by trying to excuse one's notable vices and

defects through comparisons with others that are supposed to be worse; (f) by appearing to be friendly and kindly towards others to their face, while secretly hating and plotting against them, by playing the part of a lamb abroad and that of a wolf at home, etc.

II. **The malice of hypocrisy.** 1. This vice is especially hateful to God (Prov. xi. 20), because it is opposed to the nature of God who is truth, and because it is a sin of malice. 2. Of all sins, hypocrisy was most denounced by our Lord, as the Gospels abundantly prove. He was untiring in mercy toward the weak and ignorant, but unsparing in His condemnation of the hypocritical Pharisees (Matt. xxiii. 13–39). 3. Hypocrisy is a mortal sin: (a) when the wickedness it conceals is serious, *i.e.*, when the hypocrite cares nothing about the real possession of the state of grace; (b) when the motive of the sham is something gravely sinful, *e.g.*, to seduce others from the true faith.

III. **The folly of hypocrisy.** 1. We may fight against truth, deny it, misrepresent it, or try to conceal it, but in the end truth will prevail. Hence the foolishness of laboring to have the appearance of honesty, charity, piety, purity, and the like, without actually possessing these virtues. "He that walketh sincerely walketh confidently; but he that perverteth his ways, shall be manifest" (Prov. x. 9). 2. But even if the hypocrite should succeed in deceiving man, he cannot deceive God: "Shall he be deceived as a man with your deceitful dealings?" (Job xiii. 9); "the searcher of hearts and reins is God" (Ps. vii. 10).

LESSONS. 1. Let us examine our consciences to see whether we are not in some manner given to hypocrisy. 2. We should be more anxious to correct our faults than to conceal them (Prov. xxi. 29), more desirous of praise from God than of human glory. 3. Love and cultivate simplicity, hate and shun every form of hypocrisy (3 John iv.).

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Fifth Sunday after Epiphany and Passion Sunday);
Part IV (see Fifth Sunday after Easter)

Sermons

Suiting the Action to the Word

BY THE REV. JOHN FREELAND

Not every one that saith unto me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of my Father, who is in heaven.—Gospel of the day.

OUR LORD CONDEMNED THE PHARISEES

There was no class of persons with whom our Lord had such little sympathy as those who "said and did not." The Pharisees, to whom He applied the text of Scripture, "This people honoreth me with their lips but their heart is far from me," never came near Him without experiencing the full force of the displeasure with which He regarded their habit of making much of a pious exterior to hide a soul which He likened to a "sepulchre filled with dead men's bones." And His severity is all the more eloquent, all the more emphatic, when we remember that our Lord was, of all the persons whom the world has ever known, the most gentle in His manner, and the most charitable both in His words and His actions. He could even treat His tormentors and His executioners with kindness, praying for their forgiveness, and meeting their insults with a gentle silence. He could find it easy to be very tender even towards what appears the worst form of sin, and the most distressing of iniquities. One thing He could not treat with the least show of forbearance. The harshest words he ever said, and they were exceedingly harsh, were to those who spoke much about religion and piety, who were pleased to be seen praying at the corners of the streets, who, by their

actions, even suggested to the ordinary individual not to approach them too closely because they were holy, and who at the same time never thought a righteous thought and never did a righteous action. These, as we know, were a certain kind of Pharisee very common in His day. And, therefore, on one occasion, He told His followers that unless their "justice exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees they shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

HARM DONE BY HYPOCRISY

No class of people has wrought so much harm to the cause of God as that of which we are now speaking. The reason of this is really given by our Lord Himself, in this morning's Gospel. It is because, eventually, they are bound to be found out. The evil of the heart must at some time or other make itself known; for, most assuredly, "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth" will, sooner or later, speak, try and hide it as we may by the seemingly righteous word and the apparently very religious expression. You cannot, says Christ, gather grapes of thorns; you cannot get figs from thistles; by their fruits you shall know them. But it is when they are known that the unreasoning and uncharitable world is so careful to lay the blame at the wrong door; and whereas he who conceals the wretched state of his soul under the "sheep's clothing" of a saintly exterior, should be, when exposed, all the more sharply rebuked, the Faith has to suffer three-fourths of the punishment, the whole of which he ought to bear. For the world judges more severely than our Lord does; and whereas He has said that the bad fruits of an individual cause that individual himself to be known, the world comes to a far more serious, and at the same time an extremely unjust, conclusion, and says that the bad actions of one show that he and every one of the same faith with him must be accounted very wicked. The carelessness and the simpleness of one member of the Church, therefore, do so much harm to the Church itself. When the fruits of one bad tree are recognized, not a hundred flourishing plants—not the grand, the noble, and the beautiful

example of so many thousands of the members of the Catholic Faith—seem to counteract the harm done. One sinful character spoils the effect of the righteousness of a multitude, in the same manner as a black spot on the whitest cloth assumes the most disastrous importance. The spot is noticed; the remaining part counts for nothing in spite of the fact that, in extent and area, it is out of all proportion larger than the one stain which causes all the mischief. So it is that one bad Catholic, particularly if hitherto he has manifested a somewhat pious exterior, can do an amount of harm which a hundred good ones are powerless to rectify, and can fill all things with a confusion which a congregation of Saints finds it impossible to dispel.

FALSE PROPHETS

We should be wrong, perhaps, in calling the sin of religious pretense—with which this morning's Gospel concerns itself—the very worst of sins; but it certainly may be described as the most odious, and as one which even the irreligious regard with a large amount of contempt. But the pity of it is that, in yet another manner, under circumstances differing from those already mentioned, it has wrought untold harm, filling the world with bitterness and strife. Not one of those unhappy persons who have separated themselves from the Church of Christ and finished by setting up some new kind of religion, has been at all backward in the profuse use of pious language. The "Lord, Lord" has been a very favorite phrase with them. They have, all of them, had a large supply of prayers upon their lips. Their talk, their expressions, made them seem like Saints. Arius, the first notable person to deny the divinity of our Lord, was regarded by his followers as an eminently God-fearing man. Nestorius, who refused to acknowledge that our Lady was the Mother of God, was looked upon as a most saintly person. Martin Luther is even at the present day esteemed by thousands as having been extremely holy. Nevertheless, the two former were remarkable for their haughtiness and their cruelty, and the last was so filled with imperfections

of a serious nature that the impartial historian finds the search after his virtues to be a somewhat fruitless task.

It may, however, with some show of reason be objected that these characters and others who, like them, have planted the standard of revolt against the Church of God must, after all, have been very exemplary in their conduct. If, as the Gospel says, the tree may be known by its fruits, how, it will be asked, are we to explain the fact that Reformers, as they are called, have never failed to attract as followers a multitude of people? Surely those followers had eyes to see and ears to hear. Surely they must have been perfectly aware of it had the actions of these men been evil. But they followed, and they were even enthusiastic admirers of these religious innovators. Does not this suggest that the "fruits" were good rather than evil, and that, consequently, those whom they believed in were righteous men, and not, as we have asserted, just the contrary? How else are you to account for the large following they undoubtedly had?

In the same way, brethren, as we account for the large following which that person has who is called the Evil One and whose works are acknowledged by everyone to be very wicked. The actions of the devil are well known. They are very evil. He is the parent stem from which all the other trees take their origin. But the fact of his being the worst of evil trees, and the fact, moreover, that his works are evident to the eyes of all, do not prevent the greater part of men from both following him and preferring his ways to the ways of Christ. Indeed, the human mind, which has to "examine the spirits" whether they be of God or of man—which has to pass judgment as to whether the fruit be bad fruit or good, figs or thistles—is frequently so faulty a criterion, so imperfect a means of making that judgment. It is operated on by so many complex causes, moved and influenced by so many different currents. Prejudices will make it completely blind to the very worst excesses. A mind made up will explain away what to all other persons appears without any doubt, as the worst of fruits. The devil has little difficulty in "transforming himself into an angel of light"; for half of the work has been done by those who have

made up their minds to embrace the evil way, and who, having done so, will find some reason to persuade themselves that the very worst sins are not so very bad, and that ordinary vices are really very passable virtues. This is why the prophet says, "Woe to them that call good bad, and bitter sweet." Satan is quite well aware that the bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit; he is perfectly cognizant of the fact that, "by their fruits you shall know them," is a very true principle; but, at the same time, he knows that he has another powerful weapon which, if he uses it well, as he rarely fails to do, may quite counteract the good effects of the homely truths uttered by our Lord in this morning's Gospel. He can blind the mind and prejudice the will of him who has to pass judgment on the fruits. How true this is, is to be seen almost every year in cases in which some absolutely worthless character addresses a meeting, uttering the most outrageous calumnies against the Catholic Church, its ministers, and its doctrines. In some cases the individual is a hopeless moral wreck; in other cases he has been sent to prison not once but twice and even three times. Here are bad fruits, enough and to spare. Nevertheless, will there not be a large number of persons who will remain perfectly blind to facts of this kind? You may give unanswerable proofs concerning the unrighteous works of the false prophet who is trying to gain, and is actually gaining, their confidence. You may produce accounts of trials; evidence of people who have suffered at his hands; the place, the time, the circumstances connected with everything he has done amiss—taken not from religious literature but from the secular press—but the clearer the proofs the less well you seem to get on. The followers will still follow in spite of everything.

So has it ever been in the history of false prophets and their followers. The father of lies cannot prevent the bad tree from producing bad fruit. He cannot, and he would not if he could, make it impossible for false prophets to work unrighteousness and to be of unsound life and conduct. But he *can* prevent their adherents from seeing and from recognizing that the actions are even in the least manner, unsavory. He *can* prejudice their judgment; he can, as was the case with the Jewish people, "draw a

veil over their eyes"; he can so bring it about that the state of their mind is similar to that of those to whom the prophet was sent—"seeing they cannot see, and hearing they do not understand." There is such a thing as mental blindness; and the worst form of it is that which the father of lies labors very hard to produce and to make prevalent for the spread of error. By means of it the most poisonous of herbs is gladly thought to be grapes, the most deadly plant is considered and boldly maintained to be the same as the tree of life, the worst of fruit is eagerly received as most delicious to the palate, bitter becomes sweet and evil good.

CONCLUSION

But, brethren, while we have considered the action of the false prophet, and spoken about the serious harm done by those whose evil has been at last seen, as it must eventually be, by all clear-minded persons, let us make the lesson of this morning's Gospel a practical one. No one of us, we feel sure, has the least wish to allow his words to clash with his actions or to permit his deeds to be the very opposite of the profession he makes. With the best intentions in the world, however, there is always need of the greatest care and of continual self-examination in the matter; for, almost unknown to ourselves, the lips will be at variance with the service which we ought to render to God. The "Lord, Lord," is said; but nothing is done. It is a habit so easily contracted, a fault which grows so insidiously and so imperceptibly. A really serious examination of ourselves from time to time will keep us in check; and the examination will lead us to perform and to persevere in what we have already promised, as well as to make still further good resolutions and to keep them—to "flee from evil and to do good, to seek peace and pursue it."

Reality in Religion

BY DOM ANSELM PARKER, O.S.B.

Not every one that saith to me Lord, Lord, shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father, who is in heaven, he shall enter into the kingdom of heaven.—Matt. vii. 21.

Sincerity, the key-note of the sermon on the mount

Our Lord in the sermon on the Mount, from which these words are taken, depicts the true Christian character. In every branch of conduct He puts before us the ideal, summarizing all in this: "Be ye perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect." And yet this ideal is not put before an audience of chosen souls, but before the multitude, before us all; it is not beyond the attainment of anyone. He shows Himself the true Physician, who understands both human nature and the forces working against its best interests. He does not deal with the visible symptoms of disease, but goes right down to that which will give new and genuine health. He expects those who would be His followers to be content with nothing less than a new heart.

St. John the Baptist had said of Him that He would lay the axe to the root of the tree, cutting down from the source all evil and establishing good in the very foundation. Here our Lord gives the means by which all may gain, both here and hereafter, a happiness that is secure. He said in brief: Be real with yourself, with your neighbor, with God. He taught reality in religion. He came, He said, not to destroy the law which God had given to Moses, but to fulfil it. Accordingly he inveighed vehemently against those false teachers who had hidden the law of God, which inculcated worship from the heart, by their glosses, their interpretations, their human traditions, which consisted in external observances. For religion had been made, by those who sat in the chair of Moses, a religion which was shallow and for show: it was unreal. The hypocrisy which did things for the observation of men had

rendered men so blind as to think that God was satisfied with mere outward practices of devotion, whilst true virtue was neglected. This which was superfluous our Lord would replace by what was deep and real. Let your prayers, He said, be sincere; let your almsgiving be not for applause, but in secret; love all from your heart, honor your parents not in word but in deed; and remember that sinfulness extends to thought and desire. Can we wonder that St. Matthew adds at the end: "And it came to pass that when Jesus had fully ended these words the people were in admiration at His doctrine." It was so great a contrast with the current teaching of Israel, and indeed of the world. Here was all the charm of simplicity, for reality is simple. Here was the genuine reality which is easy of attainment to all of good will—a reality at once attractive to the human heart, and pleasing to the Divine Creator. It portrayed religion, not as fulfilment of an irksome programme which performs things external, but a personal service of a Heavenly Father, manifested by virtue in every phase of daily life.

There are few of us, perhaps, who deserve the name of hypocrite; but there is need for us all to examine if in any degree we are unreal. Are we led to fulfil our religious practices by sentiment? Or do we drift on by routine? Or do we simply follow the good example of others, performing customs of piety without trying to appreciate their value? There are many types of Catholics. Some, perhaps not here to-day, profess the name of Catholic, but seldom worship God. They take comfort in a birth-right, as the Jews did who claimed Abraham for their father. Such our Lord utterly condemns. There are others who, being in the midst of the Church's privileges, do not indeed ignore them, but show a strange want of understanding that these are so many helps to unite the heart of man with God, so many means whereby the character should be purified and elevated. Many come to Mass, but they are there by presence only. Many even receive the Sacraments, but little fruit is gained because they lack dispositions that are real. Many may wear emblems of piety, or join confraternities: for this they can be commended only if their daily lives

show that inwardly in their hearts they strive to conform to what they outwardly profess.

NECESSITY OF BEARING FRUIT BEFORE MEN

As members of the household of the faith, God gives us many privileges. He has many ways of sowing the good seed, and He expects it to bear abundant fruit in our daily lives. In warning us against false prophets He gives a true criterion: He judges not by outward appearance, but by the reality of the heart; He judges a tree by its fruit. So must we judge. So too must we bear fruit before others. Reasonable men, and the unreasoning too, will judge Catholics by their fruit. How often it happens that men know nothing of the Catholic Church save through the small number of their acquaintances whom they know to be Catholics. How often do we not hear an unconscious testimony to the truth of the Catholic faith when men say: "He has done this dishonorable deed, and a Catholic too." "She said this against her neighbor, and yet she is a Catholic." Men expect our lives to be of a higher standard. They judge not by our exterior show of worship, but by our virtue or want of virtue manifested in domestic, social or business life. Therefore the way we manifest ourselves to the world is a matter of grave responsibility. St. Paul speaks strongly: "If any man have not care of his own, and especially of those of his own house, he hath denied the faith and is worse than an infidel" (1 Tim. v. 8). What a setback the influence of Jesus had when He was betrayed by one of His own inner circle of friends. In the power of us, His followers, our Lord leaves the judgment of the world concerning our religion. And the same holds true within the Catholic body. Devout practices, watchings in prayer, frequent coming to the Holy Table should produce a charm of character, a staunchness that always acts on principle. What, then, if no fruit is borne in daily life? What if we return from the Holy of Holies quarrelsome, disobedient, unkind in thought and deed? Men will discredit piety; and confusing a counterfeit piety with true devotion they will rather prefer the trust-

worthiness and natural virtue of the godless, than the sentimental veneer of goodness of those who though seemingly pious are not faithful to their duties in their daily conduct.

NECESSITY OF BEARING FRUIT BEFORE GOD

But our Lord would put before us something more fundamental and important than bearing fruit before others. What we have considered is true: we are responsible for our influence, good or bad. Yet this must not be our foremost consideration. In it there may ever lurk a danger. May God preserve us from ever acting merely with a view to impressing others. Such a motive may lead us to act that we may be seen by men, which is just that unreality against which He warns us. Above all things we must be real with ourselves, and real with God who sees in secret. He is the searcher of the reins and the heart. Then shall we bear fruit before Him. whether observed by men or not. Ours will not be the lip service which dishonors God and brought the condemnation of Isaias, confirmed by Jesus: "This people honoreth me with their lips, but their heart is far from me." We shall remember our Lord's saying: "Not everyone that saith to me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he that doeth the will of My Father, he shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." In St. Luke's account not only does our Lord proclaim the great truth that faith, or the invocation of His Holy Name, or the claim of His friendship is of no avail without the carrying out of His will; but He directly addresses to His hearers a complaint: "Why call ye Me 'Lord, Lord,' and do not the things that I say?" (Luke vi. 46). By contrast He shows throughout His teaching wherein true religion consists: "If you love Me keep My commandments." That is the real test of our adherence to Him.

Thus when the rich young man came asking: "Good Master, what good shall I do that I may have life everlasting?" Jesus answered: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." This St. Paul understood when he said: "Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the

law shall be justified" (Rom. ii. 13). To carry out the will of the Heavenly Father is the purpose for which we are created, and this is our single purpose. And in all things our Lord shows Himself as our model, saying: "My food is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (John iv. 34). "I seek not My own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John v. 30).

REWARDS

Two lasting rewards, as we may expect, follow from our constant determination to carry out the will of God. First, this single reality of purpose will lead us to act on principle, always to do what is right: we shall be steadfast against manifold temptations. This is what St. John means when he said: "The world passeth away and the concupiscence thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever" (1 John ii. 17). And our Lord, after the words of to-day's Gospel, illustrates His meaning by a parable: "Therefore, whosoever heareth My words and doeth them shall be likened to a wise man who built his house upon a rock." Whatever the violence of the storms, the house stands firm. "But everyone that heareth My words but doeth them not shall be like to a foolish man who built his house upon the sand." When the stress of circumstances come, the whole structure falls: for it has not the stableness of reality. And our Lord adds: "Great was the fall thereof." May He in His mercy save us from the shallow religion which lacks a real foundation.

The second reward for being real with ourselves and with God is brought before us by a very forcible contrast. In that great day of judgment our Lord says: "Many will say to Me: Lord, Lord, we have prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name cast out devils, and done many wonderful works in Thy name. And then will I profess unto them: I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity." Then there will be no approval, no recognition, no acknowledgment of their friendship: for in heart they were never united to God, they never fulfilled by their conduct His holy will. Rather, the good works themselves, even done in His name, will be

the cause of a greater condemnation. Oh, that He will grant us to see wherein consists real religion, religion that rests not in claiming to belong to His household, nor in protestations of His love, nor in framing good resolutions which are not followed up by effort: but a religion that sets most value on carrying out in every circumstance of life His holy will. How terrible the judgment; "I never knew you." But what a beautiful contrast do we find on that occasion when His mother and His brethren came seeking Him. Then Jesus, we are told (Matt. xii. 50; Mark iii. 35), stretching forth His hand towards His disciples said: "Behold My mother and my brethren. For whosoever shall do the will of My Father who is in Heaven, he is My brother, and sister, and mother." Oh, happy they that do the will of God if by this Jesus will recognize them as His friends. Herein, we may learn, consists the real reward for conduct that carries out His holy will, that we become the friends of God. Here is the single, simple means offered to the disciples and to us of attaining, both here and hereafter, secure happiness.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, my brethren, let us who from infancy enjoy the many privileges of the Church strive to appreciate their value as a means by which our character may be ennobled and our daily life enriched: that before others we may indeed be found to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world. Let us not make light of holy things, but by serious preparation and thanksgiving show our real dispositions, showing to Him not that we consent only, but co-operate with His grace, not that we approve only but do, not that we are led by temperament but by conviction of mind, and true devotion and sincerity of heart. Then we shall find the corrupt inclinations of our fallen nature being gradually purified, our will strengthened, our soul adorned with virtues, both natural and supernatural. Then we shall, perhaps quite unconsciously, be doing God's work before men and be rewarded with His friendship, for we shall be fulfilling by the reality of our daily life that petition

which He Himself taught us to make frequently: "Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven."

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EIGHTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT: WHAT IT ENJOINS

TEXT

Make unto you friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings.—Luke xvi. 9.

Analysis

Introduction. Among the prevailing vices of the Pharisees of old were their avarice and their hardness towards the poor. It was to show the enormity of these sins that our Lord spoke the parable we have just read. The steward who had wasted his master's goods was in reality bound to make restitution for the damage he had caused, but instead of doing so he added another sin to his account by influencing the master's debtors unjustly to lessen their own bills.

From the evil action of the unjust steward our Lord drew a very salutary lesson for all Christians. He tells us that

as the steward was wise and shrewd enough to make use of money for temporal advantage, in order to gain the favor and assistance of men, so we should employ the goods of this world in such wise that they may obtain for us eternal blessings. If we have obtained money or property unjustly, restitution should be made; if we abound with wealth legitimately acquired, we should remember that we are stewards of God and are bound to assist God's poor out of our abundance.

I. **The duty of restitution.** The Seventh Commandment requires that we return to their owners ill-gotten goods, and compensate them for any loss we have caused them; the obligation is grave or light according to the nature of the offence, and the sin remains until a sincere determination is formed to discharge the obligation. 2. The circumstances of restitution are: (a) it must be made by the person that caused the damage, or by those who inherit the ill-gotten goods; (b) it should be made to the person injured, if this is possible, and if not, the goods should be given to the poor, or to some charitable purpose, or applied to the spiritual advantage of the injured party; (c) the goods taken, or their equivalent must be restored, and any losses suffered by the owner through the deprivation of these goods must be compensated for; (d) restitution must be made as soon as possible, *i.e.*, without any undue delay. 3. Inability to make restitution excuses only as long as the inability lasts, and only in so far as it is real. Hence if one cannot restore all, he is obliged to restore what he can.

II. **The duty of almsgiving.** 1. The Seventh Commandment implies the obligation of assisting the poor and needy as far as we are able. Almsgiving, therefore, is not a matter of supererogation, but is a strict duty, because, (a) it is necessarily contained in the law of charity (1 John iii. 18); (b) God has expressly commanded it (Deut. xv. 11; Luke xi. 41; 2 Cor. viii. 14); (c) our Lord declares that the omission of alms deeds will be punished by eternal damnation (Matt. xxv. 42).

2. Reason and experience show us the need of this precept; for many persons, without their own fault, are pitiably destitute, *e.g.*, orphans, widows, the sick and disabled, the deformed, insane, and the like. 3. The amount of alms one must give cannot be definitely determined, but the rule is that each must give of his superfluity, *i.e.*, from what he has left over after he has provided for his own life and necessities according to his state. Unnecessary extravagance and display do not excuse from the obligation of giving alms. 4. Alms deeds comprise all the corporal works of mercy, namely, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the defenceless, to visit the sick and the imprisoned, and to bury the dead.

Lessons. 1. As nothing causes greater remorse on the deathbed than the unfulfilled obligation of restitution, so nothing affords a better sign of true repentance for injustice done than the willingness to restore and make compensation now, during life. 2. If we wish our judgment to be easy and our eternity full of happiness, let us be generous to the poor and needy in this world: "He that hath mercy on the poor, lendeth to the Lord, and the Lord will repay him" (Prov. xix. 17); "alms deliver from sin" (Tobias iv. 11); "blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day" (Ps. xl. 2). 3. If you have much, give abundantly; if little, bestow what you can, but whatever you give, give it cheerfully, and without ostentation.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

What the Seventh Commandment Requires

I. RESTITUTION

We now come to the positive part of this Commandment, in which the first thing to be considered is satisfaction or restitution; for without satisfaction or restitution the sin is not forgiven. But as the law of restitution is binding not only

on the person who commits theft, but also on all who co-operate in the sin, it is necessary to explain who are indispensably bound to this satisfaction or restitution. There are several classes who are thus bound.

The first consists of those who order others to steal, and who are not only the authors and accomplices of theft, but also the most criminal among thieves.

Another class embraces those, who, when they cannot command others to commit theft, persuade and encourage it. These, since they are like the first class in intention, though unlike them in power, are equally guilty of theft.

A third class is composed of those who consent to the theft committed by others.

The fourth class is that of those who are accomplices in and derive gain from theft; if that can be called gain, which, unless they repent, consigns them to everlasting torments. Of them David says: "If thou didst see a thief, thou didst run with him." [1]

The fifth class of thieves are those who, having it in their power to prohibit theft, so far from opposing or preventing it, fully and freely suffer and sanction its commission.

The sixth class is constituted of those who are well aware that the theft was committed, and when it was committed; and yet so far from mentioning it, pretend they know nothing about it.

The seventh and last, comprises all who assist in the accomplishment of theft, who guard, defend, receive or harbor thieves.

All these are bound to make restitution to those from whom any thing has been stolen, and are to be earnestly exhorted to the discharge of so necessary a duty.

Neither are those who approve and commend thefts entirely innocent of this crime. Children also who steal from their parents and wives who steal from their husbands are not guiltless of theft.

[1] Ps. xlix. 18.

2. ALMS-DEEDS

This Commandment also implies an obligation to sympathize with the poor and needy, and to relieve their difficulties and distresses out of the means with which we have been blessed. Concerning this subject, which cannot be insisted on too often or too strongly, the pastor will find abundant matter to enrich his discourses in the works of St. Cyprian,[2] St. Chrysostom,[3] St. Gregory Nazianzen,[4] and other eminent writers on alms-deeds. The pastor, therefore, should encourage the faithful to be willing and anxious to assist those who have to depend on charity.

The necessity of alms-deeds should also form the subject matter of the pastor's instructions. The faithful are to be strongly impressed with the obligation imposed on them of being really and practically liberal to the poor; and the pastor will recall this great truth that on the last day God will condemn the uncharitable, and consign them to eternal fires, while on the contrary He will praise and introduce into His heavenly country those who have exercised mercy towards the poor. These two sentences have been already pronounced by the lips of Christ the Lord: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess the kingdom prepared for you;" and: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire." [5]

The pastor should also cite those texts of Scripture which are calculated to persuade to the performance of this important duty: "Give and it shall be given to you." [6] He should dwell on the promise of God, the richest and most abundant that can be conceived: "There is no man who hath left house, or brethren, etc., that shall not receive an hundred times as much now in this time; and in the world to come life everlasting;" [7] and he should add these words of our Lord: "Make unto your-

[2] Cypr., lib. de opera et eleemosyn.
[3] Chrysost., hom. 32. ad pop. Antioch; hom. 33, 34. in Math.; hom. 16, 37. ad pop. Antioch.
[4] Nazianz., orat. de pauperum amore; August., serm. 50, 227. de tempore; hom. 18, 19, 28. 45.
[5] Matt. xxv. 34, 41.
[6] Luke vi. 38.
[7] Mark x. 29, 30.

selves friends of the mammon of iniquity, that when you shall fail, they may receive you into everlasting dwellings." [8]

The pastor should also explain the parts of this necessary duty, so that whoever is unable to give may at least lend to the poor what they need to sustain life, according to the command of Christ our Lord: "Lend, hoping for nothing thereby." [9] The singular happiness of such an exercise of mercy is thus expressed by holy David: "Acceptable is the man that showeth mercy and lendeth.[10]

But if we are not able to give to those who must depend on the charity of others for their sustenance, it is an act of Christian piety, as well as a means of avoiding idleness, to procure by our labor and industry what is necessary for the relief of the poor. To this the Apostle exhorts all by his own example. "For yourselves," he says, writing to the Thessalonians, "know how you ought to imitate us;" [11] and again: "Use your endeavor to be quiet, and that you do your own business, and work with your own hands, as we commanded you;" [12] and to the Ephesians: "He that stole, let him steal no more; but rather let him labor working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have something to give to them that suffereth need.[13]

3. FRUGALITY

We should also practice frugality, and draw sparingly on the kindness of others, that we may not be a burden or a trouble to them. The exercise of considerateness is conspicuous in all the Apostles, but pre-eminently so in St. Paul. Writing to the Thessalonians he says: "You remember, brethren, our labor and toil; working night and day lest we should be chargeable to any of you, we preached amongst you the Gospel of God;" [14] and in another place the same

[8] Luke xvi. 9.
[9] Luke vi. 35.
[10] Ps. cxi. 5.
[11] 2 Thess. iii. 7.
[12] 1 Thess. iv. 11.
[13] Eph. iv. 28.
[14] 1 Thess. ii. 9.

Apostle says: "In labor and in toil, we worked night and day, lest we should be burdensome to any of you." [15]

SANCTION OF THIS COMMANDMENT: I. THE PUNISHMENT OF ITS VIOLATION

To inspire the faithful with an abhorrence of all sins against this Commandment, the pastor will have recourse to the prophets and the other inspired writers, to show the detestation in which God holds the crimes of theft and robbery and the awful threats which He denounces against their perpetrators. "Hear this," exclaims the prophet Amos, "you that crush the poor, and make the needy of the land to fail, saying: When will the month be over, and we shall sell our wares, and the Sabbath, and we shall open the corn; that we may lessen the measure, and increase the sickle, and may convey in deceitful balances?" [16] Many passages of the same kind may be found in Jeremias,[17] Proverbs,[18] and Ecclesiasticus.[19] Indeed it cannot be doubted that such crimes are the seeds from which have sprung in great part the evils which in our times overspread the face of society.

THE REWARD OF OBSERVING THIS COMMANDMENT

That Christians may accustom themselves to those acts of generosity and kindness towards the poor and the needy which are inculcated by the second part of this Commandment, the pastor will place before them those ample rewards which God promises in this life and in the next to the beneficent and the bountiful.

[15] 2 Thess. iii. 8.
[16] Amos viii. 4, 5.
[17] Jer. v. et xxi. et xxii.
[18] Prov. xxi.
[19] Eccl. x.

Sermons

ALMS-DEEDS

BY THE RIGHT REV. ALEX. MACDONALD, D.D.

GOOD WORKS

No one of the apostolic writers insists so strongly on the necessity of good works as St. James, known in the Gospel as "the brother of the Lord." Indeed, he may be styled the Apostle of Good Works, as St. Paul is the Apostle of Faith. Not that either makes little of what the other makes so much of, but that the one found it needful to lay stress on one of the two things that are necessary to salvation, the other upon the other of these things. If "faith without works is dead in itself," so are works without faith dead—bereft of that goodness in virtue of which they are said to make our "calling and election sure."

The first and greatest of the Commandments, which our Lord declares to be the sum of the Law and the Prophets, is charity —the love of God above all things and of one's neighbor as oneself. Now the proof of love, as St. Gregory observes, is the rendering of service, the performance of good works, the doing something for God and our fellow-man. Good works are thus necessary to attest our love, to prove it genuine, and would be necessary for this reason even if man had never fallen from his first estate. But in the case of fallen man, of sinful man, they are necessary for another reason. By the first and greatest of the Commandments man is bound to love God. Sin, in its root and essence, is love of self, reaching, as St. Augustine puts it, even to the contempt of God. When man sins he robs God of what is due Him, and justice requires that he should make restitution. The way to satisfy the claims of justice is to take away from the one who possesses unjustly and give back to the rightful owner. Now the goods which belong to man, and which are liable to be levied upon, to the end that restitution may be made, are threefold: mental goods

corporal goods, external goods, or the goods of fortune. By prayer restitution is made in the first order of goods, by fasting in the second, by alms-deeds in the third, for "He who giveth to the poor lendeth to the Lord." Hence prayer, and fasting, and alms-deeds, these three, have a sort of preeminence among good works, and are commonly spoken of as the three keys of the kingdom of heaven. It is the last only of the three that I shall speak.

WORKS OF MERCY

An alms-deed is defined as something given out of compassion to a person in need. But unless it is given for God's sake, it is not a good work in the Christian point of view, I mean not such a work as can merit an eternal reward. The thing given may belong to the spiritual order or to the corporal; it may be for the soul or for the body. Hence alms-deeds are coextensive with the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. The corporal works are seven in number, corresponding to seven corporal needs of our neighbor that we may be called on to supply. These needs exist in life or just after death. In this latter case, the need is sepulture or interment; hence the corporal work of mercy, to bury the dead. The deeds of our neighbor in life are either common, such as may arise in the case of any person and under any circumstances, or they are special, that is, confined to a few and in exceptional circumstances. The common necessaries of life are food, drink, clothing, and shelter; whence the four corporal works of mercy, to feed the hungry, to give drink to the thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the homeless. The special needs exist in the case of persons that are sick or in prison; hence to visit the sick and to visit those that are in prison are two other corporal works of mercy which make up the seven. The spiritual miseries that we may be called upon to relieve are either sin or its consequences, that is, the evils resulting from it. We help directly to free a person from sin by bringing him to repentance, which is the first and greatest of the spiritual works of mercy; indirectly, in two ways, by forgiveness of injuries,

which is a heaping of coals of fire upon the head of the offender, and by prayer. The consequences of sin may affect the understanding, and hence ignorance, which is removed by instruction; or the practical reason, whence lack of prudence, which calls for counsel; or the heart, and this is sorrow, which is assuaged by sympathy and soothing words: or, lastly, the manners, whence forwardness or ill-temper, which, if it can not be cured by instruction or counsel, must be put up with. The last of the spiritual works of mercy is thus to bear wrongs patiently.

We see, then, how all the corporal and spiritual works of mercy are comprised in alms-deeds. And as the well-being of the soul is of incomparably greater importance than that of the body, it follows that to give spiritual alms is a work of vastly greater merit in itself than to give corporal alms. Yet, as there are but relatively few who can give the primary and most needful spiritual alms, whereas almost everybody can give more or less of corporal alms, and as the needs of the body brook no delay in being supplied, not so the needs of the soul, it is customary to use the word alms almost exclusively in reference to the corporal works of mercy, and especially to food and clothing, which are the most common and urgent needs of the body, or to money, which is the means of procuring all that is needful for the body. It is in this ordinary, every-day sense I would speak of alms-giving, and I propose to deal briefly with its obligation, its merits and the manner in which it should be done.

OBLIGATION OF ALMS-DEEDS

Alms-giving, in the strict and narrow sense of the word, is both a precept and a counsel; a precept when our neighbor is in urgent need, and we have the means of relieving him; a counsel always to those who would satisfy for their sins and lay up treasures in heaven. That it is a precept follows from the general precept of charity: *Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.* Again, we have the express words of Scripture: "Defraud not the poor of alms" (Ecclus. iv. 1); and, "Depart from me, ye

cursed, into everlasting fire, which was prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry and you gave me not to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me not to drink, I was a stranger and you took me not in, naked and you covered me not, sick and in prison and you did not visit me" (Matt. xxv. 41-54). That alms-giving is a counsel at all times, we gather from those other words of our Lord: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy," and again, "If thou wouldst be perfect, go sell all thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow me."

But how are we to know when almsgiving is a precept binding in conscience and when a counsel only? We have to consider, on the one hand, our neighbor's necessity, and, on the other, the means we may possess of relieving his necessity. The necessity may be three-fold, extreme, grave, or ordinary. In like manner, the means may be ranged in a threefold order, (1) as necessary to support oneself or family, (2) as necessary to keep up a certain state varying with the position of a person in society, (3) as superfluous. No one is ever bound to give alms out of what is simply necessary to support himself or family, for the reason that well-ordered charity begins at home. But in case of extreme necessity on the part of one's neighbor one is bound to relieve him with such means as are needful to keep up one's state in life. And out of what are known as superfluous goods, that is, such goods as are over and above what is necessary to keep up one's state in life, one is bound to give alms from time to time, as occasion may require.

MERIT OF ALMS-GIVING

Upon the merit of alms-giving I need not use many words. Let me cite for you the sage advice of the elder Tobias to his son. "Give alms of thy substance," he tells him, "and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned away from thee. According to thy ability be merciful. If thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have but little, take care to bestow willingly a little. For thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward against the day of thy need. For alms deliver from all sin, and from

death, and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness." These words need no comment. The same doctrine with regard to the wondrous efficacy of alms-giving in moving God to show mercy is inculcated frequently in Holy Writ. But nowhere is it more vividly put before us or more forcibly brought home to us than in the words in which our Lord set forth the reasons that will influence Him to bless or to condemn in the last judgment (Matt. xxv. 34–46). *Amen, I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it unto Me.*

MANNER OF ALMS-GIVING

How are we to give alms, and to whom? Our Lord Himself tells us how. "Take heed that thou do not put thy justice before men, to be seen of them; else thou shalt not have a reward of thy Father who is in heaven. Therefore, when you doest an alms-deed sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be honored by men: amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth; that thy alms may be in secret, and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee." We are to give for God's sake, cheerfully, for "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and, so far as may be, in secret. And in what order are we to give? First, we are to give to those whose need is greatest; no matter who they are. But when the need is the same, first, to our relations; secondly, to those who are of the household of the faith; lastly, to those that are without. Of course, those who are in straitened circumstances through no fault of their own are more deserving of charity; they have a stronger claim upon us. But if we know our neighbor to be in need, we ought to relieve him when we are able, no matter how he came to be so. He who searches too closely into the causes of actual poverty will be likely to find in almost every case what he may deem sufficient reason for withholding his alms.

CONCLUSION

Let us then give alms, and give freely. Let us give for the sake of Him who, "when He was rich, became poor for our

sakes," that through His poverty we should be made rich. The saints of God saw Christ in the persons of the poor. By the strong light of faith which shone in their hearts they read the full meaning of those words of His: *As often as you did it to the least of these, you did it unto Me.* Let us give tangible proof that this faith is not dead within us, that we realize the efficacy of alms-deeds. Let the example of our charity put to shame the selfish spirit of an age in which so many of the rich ignore the claims of the poor, and hoard up their hundreds of thousands and millions of dollars, while their fellow-men are actually famishing around them. This is surely the crying evil of our day; that grasping avarice which never is sated, but grows on what it feeds on; that thirst for wealth and material comforts which knows no slaking. Never, perhaps, less than in our own day have men realized the sublime wisdom of those words of the Apostle, "But having food and wherewithal to be clothed, with these we are content. For they that will become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires that drown men in destruction and perdition." Time was when the spirit of the Gospel pervaded society, when the poor were recognized openly as the friends of God, when men gave generously to the poor of Christ and to the Church His Spouse, which He has wished to subsist in this world on the alms of the faithful—gave ungrudgingly, looking not for a return in this world, but looking up and forward to the eternal recompense. But I fear this noble spirit is dying away, and the sordid, worldly spirit taking its place. It but too frequently is the case nowadays that what men give for the support of the poor has to be squeezed out of them by the pressure of direct taxation. What is sadder still, greed of gain has possessed itself of the hearts of many Catholics, who show an unworthy niggardliness even toward God Himself, as often as there is question of upholding the dignity of divine worship, the temple and the altar, of supporting pastors, and advancing the cause of Catholic education. Too many, again, when they do give, give not as if to God and looking to the eternal reward, but have to be wheedled out of their money by the enticements of picnics and bazaars, concerts, and card-parties and lotteries, all of which threaten to take the very life

and soul out of charity by giving prominence to the motive of pleasure, or the more sordid one of self-interest, in place of the pure motive of God's love. It is our duty as Christians to do our utmost to stem this torrent of worldliness that bids fair to sweep everything before it, and to do this we must mould our lives on the maxims of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. These and these alone furnish a sure foundation to build on. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of God." "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break through and steal." Happy the one who makes these maxims the guiding principles of his life. The lines shall fall to him in pleasant places. Here he will rest sweetly in the arms of God's gracious providence, in the arms of that heavenly Father who feeds the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, who never suffers to want for anything those who put their trust in Him. And when death dissolves this earthly dwelling, he will have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Restitution

BY THE REV. FERDINAND HECKMANN, O.F.M.

Pay what thou owest.—Matt. xviii. 28.

INTRODUCTION

"Pay what thou owest." This is a demand of both human and Divine justice. God in His infinite justice must necessarily demand that every debt of sin be paid to the last farthing. In order to obtain life everlasting, it is not enough to die to our sins and forsake them entirely; it is also necessary to live in the full accomplishment of justice. "Who shall dwell in thy tabernacle, O Lord?" says the royal prophet. "He that walketh without blemish and worketh justice" (Ps. xiv. 1, 2). To obtain the remission of other sins, it is sufficient to be heartily sorry for them and uprightly confess them with a firm purpose of amendment; but sins by which an injustice has been done to

our fellow-man cannot be forgiven and blotted out unless the wrong done to him is repaired. The virtue of justice requires that to the penance and repentance for sin by which we have injured our neighbor be joined reparation and restitution. We can injure his neighbor in his temporal possessions, in his honor and good name, and in his soul. Each of these violations of our neighbor's unimpeachable rights requires reparation and restitution.

RESTITUTION FOR INJURY TO POSSESSION

Restitution, then, is an act of justice by which exact reparation as far as possible is made for an injury that has been done to another. An injury may be done to another by taking away from him, or detaining from him, what is known to belong to him in strict justice, and by wilfully doing him damage in his property. Whosoever, therefore, has taken away anything from another unjustly, whether by force or fraud, or has been the guilty cause of its being taken away by others, or has in his possession against the owner's will or knowledge the goods which he knows belong to him, is bound by the strictest laws of justice to restore these goods to their true owner either in kind or value, and also to make up the loss the owner has sustained for want of them through his fault if he be able; otherwise he is incapable of receiving pardon for his sins. Again, whosoever has unjustly caused any loss or damage to his neighbor in his temporal possessions is bound by the same laws of justice to make compensation for the loss or damage as far as he is able, otherwise his sin will never be forgiven.

This obligation of reparation and restitution is founded upon the natural, Divine, and human laws of justice. As justice between man and man requires that what belongs to another should be rendered to him, justice is violated by keeping from another against his reasonable will what belongs to him, and by wilfully doing him damage to his property. Justice therefore requires that restitution and reparation be made whenever that virtue has been violated. A duty prescribed by the natural, Divine, and human law of justice, which has more-

over the greatest influence on our eternal salvation, must necessarily be reputed a duty of the strictest obligation. Such is the duty of restitution. The law of God in the severest terms and under pain of forfeiting all our rights to the kingdom of Heaven obliges us to restore whatever we have acquired unjustly. "Thou shalt not steal," says the Lord; by which Commandment we are not only forbidden to take away by force or fraud anything from our neighbor, but also to keep unjustly what belongs to him; for as the end of this Divine law was to provide for the safety of mankind in general, and to secure everyone in the possession of his property from any outward injustice, this end would not be sufficiently attained, were it lawful for anyone to retain peaceably what he has unjustly acquired, because such a retention is as detrimental to the neighbor's welfare as any theft. If the law says, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods," which, being only an act of the mind, is highly criminal before God, how much more so is it not to retain in our hands or to deprive our neighbor of his property. The Old Law says, "Whosoever has taken away anything by stealth, shall make good the loss to the owner, If any man steal an ox or a sheep, and kill or sell it, he shall restore five oxen for one ox, and four sheep for one sheep. If that which he stole be found alive with him either ox or ass or sheep, he shall restore double" (Exod. xxii. 1, 4, 12).

The obligation of restitution is also founded on the love we owe our neighbor in virtue of the Divine command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." How can we pretend to love him whilst we unjustly retain in our possession what belongs to him. "Do not do to another," says the law of charity, "what you do not wish to be done to yourself." We certainly desire that others restore our property or repair the injury done to us, so we should treat them in like manner.

The fulfillment of the duty of restitution is included in the firm purpose of amendment which is necessary for the forgiveness of sin. There cannot be a firm purpose of amendment unless the injustice done to the neighbor is repaired. God pardons sin only when repented of, and true repentance for injustices committed implies the effectual desire of repair-

ing them. "Sin is not forgiven," says St. Augustine, "unless the ill-gotten goods are restored." The prophet Ezechiel tells us "that if the wicked man restore the pledge, and render what he has robbed, and walk in the commandments of life, and do no unjust thing, he shall surely live and shall not die" (Ez. xxxiii. 15). Zacheus, a rich publican, one day received our Saviour into his house with joy, and full of sorrow for all his sins of injustice and oppression, made a generous resolution. "Behold," he said, "the half of my goods I give to the poor." It was a fine thing for this rich man to give half of all he possessed to the poor, but our Saviour spoke no word of praise. When, however, Zacheus made this important addition to his statement, "And if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold," our Divine Saviour said to him, "This day is salvation come to this house" (Luke xix. 9). Neither contrition nor almsgiving would have been of any avail to him unless he also made restitution where it was due.

"Neither thieves nor rapacious men," says St. Paul, "shall possess the Kingdom of God" (1 Cor. vi. 10); by rapacious men we must here understand, as St. Augustine tells us, those who appropriate to themselves and retain the property of others. If, as St. James assures us, there will be "judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy," if Jesus Christ will say on the last day to those that have not fed the hungry, given drink to the thirsty, or clothed the naked, "Depart from me, ye accursed, into everlasting fire," how much more terrible will then not be the judgment of those who have not restored ill-gained possessions or repaired the injury they have done to their neighbor; if those are worthy of hell who have not performed works of mercy according to their wealth, what will then be the punishment of those who fail to restore what belongs to another? They will for all eternity experience the woe pronounced over them by the prophet Habacuc: "Woe to him that heapeth together that which is not his own" (Hab. ii. 6).

Restitution must be made by him who is the author of the injustice or injury to his neighbor. If the object of which he has deprived him is still forthcoming he is bound to restore it

to him. But if the stolen object is no longer in his possession, or if he has only done damage to the property of his neighbor, he must compensate him for the loss sustained. If the author of the injury dies without having satisfied his obligation, the duty of making restitution or reparation passes down to his heirs. If these do not perform their duty, then the obligation of restitution devolves on those who by counsel or action were accessory to the sin of injustice, or who did not hinder it although it was in their power and their duty required them to so hinder it. Restitution or compensation must be made to the injured person or his heirs. Only in case this should be impossible can the duty of restitution be satisfied by giving to the poor or to some other charitable purpose. Never, however, is the guilty person allowed to derive gain or profit from his acts of injustice. Absolute impossibility on his part alone will absolve him from the duty of restitution and reparation.

RESTITUTION FOR INJURY TO HONOR

"A good name," says Holy Writ, "is better than riches, and good favor is above silver and gold" (Prov. xxii. 1). "Man," says St. Francis of Sales, "possesses three lives: the spiritual life which consists in the possession of sanctifying grace, the material life which consists in the union of soul and body, and the civil life which consists in the honor and good name which he enjoys in human society."

If it then is an unavoidable duty of conscience to restore ill-gotten goods or to repair the damage done to the property of another, it is a still greater duty of conscience to repair the injury done to the honor and good name of our fellow-man.

We injure the honor and good name of our fellow-man by calumny. One can render himself guilty of the sin of calumny in three ways: By imputing to his neighbor a fault of which he knows him to be innocent, or by attributing to him a vice which he has not; by augmenting the real faults of the neighbor; by interpreting in a bad way the good actions of the neighbor or by accusing him of evil intentions. Such a robber of his neighbor's good name is bound to retract the calumny

before those persons in whose presence he has made it, and only if for some grave reason it would be impossible for him to make the retraction, or if the calumniated person should dispense him from it, is he freed from the duty of retraction.

Again we can deprive our neighbor of his honor and good name by detraction. Detraction is the unjust damaging of another's good name by the unnecessary revealing of some fault or crime of which he is really guilty, or at least is seriously believed to be guilty. The detractor because he has violated not only the virtue of charity but also that of justice, since every man has an unimpeachable right to his good name, is bound to restitution. He must do his best to put back the one whom he has outraged in the possession of the good name which the latter hitherto enjoyed. He must, when a favorable opportunity presents itself, speak well of the defamed person and thus try to restore his good name. Many seek to excuse the injury they have done to their fellow-man by detraction, saying: "What I have said is true." Frequently it is not true, and nothing else than a false surmise; and even if it should be true there is no right on our part to make it public. "The tongue," says Holy Writ, "is indeed a little member, but a world of iniquity" (James iii. 5). Every one is bound to be so careful in the use of his tongue that he does no injury to his neighbor in his speech. As long as the fault or crime of our neighbor is secret, he has a right to his good name, and it would be robbery to deprive him of it.

Another way in which the good name and honor of our fellow-man can be injured is contumely. Those render themselves guilty of contumely who accuse another of dishonorable words or deeds in his presence in order to hurt his feelings. He who in this manner has unjustly violated the honor of his fellow-man must repair the injury by an apology.

RESTITUTION FOR SCANDAL

Man's greatest and most precious possession on earth is his innocence and virtue. To deprive him of these is a grave injury and demands reparation and restitution. We deprive

our fellow-man of innocence and virtue by giving scandal. Scandal may be given by words, by actions, or by omissions. Scandal in words consists in speaking against religion and its ministers, by blaspheming, cursing, and by words against modesty. Scandal in action is given by misbehavior in church, by working on Sundays, by disputes, anger and quarrels, by violating the laws of fast and abstinence in the presence of others, by indecent familiarities, by debauchery, and by immodesty in dress. Scandal by omission is given by neglecting to hear Mass on Sunday, by neglecting the Easter Communion, by neglecting to watch over the conduct of those persons committed to one's charge. In short, scandal is given whenever the Commandments of God or of the Church are publicly transgressed which may cause our neighbor to offend God. The evil caused by scandal is often irreparable. Hence the dreadful anathema of our Lord: "Woe to the world because of scandals; woe to that man by whom scandal cometh; it were better for him that a mill-stone should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be drowned in the depth of the sea" (Matt. xviii. 6, 7). Those who have given scandal are bound to repair the injury they have done to their neighbor's soul as far as lies in their power by giving a good example, by means of good counsel, by exhortations, and most of all by prayer.

CONCLUSION

See then to it that you do no injustice or injury to your neighbor in his possessions, good name, or soul. And if you have been guilty of any injustice towards him, make reparation to him as soon as possible, knowing that without due reparation for all sins of injustice it is impossible to save your souls.

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NINTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION

TEXT

Let no temptation take hold on you, but such as is human: and God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will make also with temptation issue, that you may be able to bear it.—1 Cor. x. 13.

Analysis

Introduction. In this Epistle St. Paul is telling the faithful of Corinth how needful it is for all to be on their guard against temptation. He says that he finds it necessary to chastise his own body, thus bringing it into subjection, lest he himself should yield to the tempter and become a castaway. As a proof of the peril in which we all stand, he cites the history of the Jews who went out from Egypt, great multitudes of whom, on account of their sins, perished in the desert and never saw the promised land. Hence the great danger of temptation and the need of vigilance. The Apostle warns the Corinthians, therefore, to eschew every temptation they can, and as for those which spring unavoidably from the conditions of our present existence, he tells them to trust in God's help, knowing that God will never permit them to be tempted above their

strength, but will always give grace sufficient to conquer all their enemies. St. Paul's advice to the Corinthians was for all Christians and for all time.

I. **Meaning of temptation.** 1. To tempt means: (a) to test, to try one, in order to ascertain his dispositions, his character, etc.; (b) to subject one to trials and difficulties in order to give him the opportunity of practising virtue, of showing good example, and thus of giving glory to God; (c) to provoke one to moral evil with the intention of leading him to commit sin. God does not tempt in the first way, since He is in need of no proofs of our dispositions and character. Neither does He tempt us in the third way, since He cannot be the author or cause of sin (James i. 14). In the second manner God can and does tempt man, as He did in the cases of Abraham, Job, and Tobias. 2. Temptation which is an incitement to sin arises from three sources: (a) the concupiscence of the flesh; (b) the world; (c) the devil. 3. *Concupiscence of the flesh* means the moral corruption of our nature which results from original sin and ever inclines us to evil. This is our greatest and most dangerous tempter, both because it is internal and because it remains with us throughout life. 4. *The world* here means the corrupt maxims and bad example of the wicked, and the numerous incitements to follow them which surround us in life. 5. By *the devil* we mean the assaults of evil spirits, who are the enemies of mankind, and who strive constantly to ensnare us. 6. Temptation is not the same as sin. It is not a sin to be tempted, unless we are the responsible cause of the temptation; but it is a sin to yield to temptation, either by doing evil, or consciously desiring it, or dwelling on the thought of it with pleasure.

II. **Meaning of the words, "lead us not into temptation."** 1. In this Petition of the Lord's Prayer we do not ask that God will deliver us from *all* temptations, since this would be impossible in the present state of our corrupt nature, and would deprive us of a rich harvest of merits. 2. We do ask in this Petition that God will either remove dangerous temptations from us, or grant

us the grace to overcome them; in other words we pray that God will never permit us to be overcome by temptation of any kind.

Conclusion. 1. The dispositions that should accompany this prayer are distrust of self and confidence in God. 2. The means of conquering temptation are chiefly two: (a) vigilance, which consists in custody of the senses, avoidance of idleness and dangerous occasions, and prompt resistance to temptation; (b) prayer, which includes imploring God for help in time of temptation, frequently raising our minds and hearts to Him, hearing and meditating on His word, and frequenting the Sacraments.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

The Sixth Petition of the Lord's Prayer

And lead us not into temptation

This petition necessary even after the preceding petitions have been granted

When the children of God, having obtained the pardon of their sins, are inflamed with the desire of giving to God worship and veneration; when they long for the kingdom of heaven; when they engage in the performance of all the duties of piety towards the Deity, relying entirely on His paternal will and providence—then it is, no doubt, that the enemy of mankind employs the more actively all his artifices, and prepares all his resources to attack them so violently as to justify the fear that, wavering and altered in their sentiments, they may relapse into sin, and thus become far worse than they had been before. To such as these may justly be applied the saying of the Prince of the Apostles: "It had been better for them not to have known the way of justice, than, after they have known it, to turn back from that holy commandment which was delivered to them."[1]

Importance of explaining this petition

Hence our Lord has commanded us to offer this Petition so that we may commend ourselves daily to God, and implore His

[1] 2 Pet. ii. 21.

paternal care and assistance, fully realizing that, if we be deserted by the divine protection, we should soon fall into the snares of our most crafty enemy.

Nor is it in the Lord's prayer alone that He has commanded us to beg of God not to suffer us to be led into temptation. In His address to the Apostles also, on the very eve of His death, after He had declared them *clean,* He admonished them of this duty in these words: "Pray that ye enter not into temptation." [2]

This admonition, reiterated by our Lord, imposes on the pastor the weighty obligation of exciting the faithful to a frequent use of this prayer, so that, beset as men constantly are by the great dangers which the devil prepares, they may ever address to God, who alone can repel those dangers, the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation."

REASONS FOR THIS PETITION.—I. HUMAN FRAILTY

The faithful will understand how very much they stand in need of this divine assistance, if they remember their own weakness and ignorance, if they recollect this saying of Christ: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"; [3] if they call to mind how grievous and destructive are the misfortunes of men brought on through the instigation of the devil, unless they be upheld and assisted by the right hand of the Most High.

What more striking example can there be of human infirmity, than the holy band of the Apostles, who, though they had just before felt very courageous, at the first sight of danger, abandoned the Saviour and fled. A still more conspicuous example is the conduct of the Prince of the Apostles. He who a short time before loudly protested his courage and special loyalty to Christ, he who had been so confident in himself as to say: "Though I should die with thee, I will not deny thee," [4] became so affrighted at the voice of a poor servant-maid that he declared at once with an oath that he knew not the Lord. Doubtless his courage was not equal to his good-will. But if, by the frailty of human nature in which they confided, even the saints have sinned grievously,

[2] John xv. 10; Matt. xxvi. 41.
[3] Matt. xxvi. 41.
[4] Matt. xxvi. 35.

what have not others to fear, who are so far below them in holiness?

2. THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE FLESH

Wherefore, let the pastor remind the faithful of the conflicts and dangers in which we are continually engaged, as long as the soul is in this mortal body, assailed as we are on all sides by the world, the flesh, and the devil.

How few are there who are not compelled to experience at their great cost what anger, what concupiscence can do in us? Who is not annoyed by these stings? who does not feel these goads? who does not burn with these smouldering fires? And, indeed, so various are these assaults, so diversified these attacks, that it is extremely difficult not to receive some grievous wound.

3. THE TEMPTATIONS OF THE DEVIL

And besides these enemies that dwell and live with us there are, moreover, those most bitter foes, of whom it is written: "Our wrestling is not against flesh and blood; but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places." [5] For to our inward conflicts are added the external assaults and attacks of the devils, who both assail us openly, and also insinuate themselves by stratagem into our souls, so much so that it is only with great difficulty that we can escape them.

The Apostle entitles the demons *princes,* on account of the excellence of their nature, since by nature they are superior to man, and to all other visible creatures. He also calls them *powers,* because they excel not only by their nature, but also by their power. He designates them *rulers of the world of darkness,* because they rule not the world of light and glory, that is to say, the good and the pious, but the world of gloom and darkness, namely, those who, blinded by the defilement and darkness of a wicked life, are satisfied to have for their leader the devil, the prince of darkness. He also terms the demons *the spirits of wickedness,* because there is a wickedness of the spirit, as well as

[5] Eph. vi. 12.

of the flesh. What is called the wickedness of the flesh inflames the appetite to lusts and pleasures, which are perceived by the senses; while the wickedness of the spirit are evil purposes and depraved desires, which belong to the superior part of the soul, and which are so much worse than the wickedness of the flesh as mind itself and reason are higher and more excellent than the senses. The wickedness of Satan the Apostle spoke of as *in the high places,* because the chief aim of the evil one is to deprive us of our heavenly inheritance.

From all this we may understand that the power of these enemies is great, their courage undaunted, their hatred of us enormous and unmeasured; that they also wage against us a perpetual war, so that with them there can be no peace, no truce.

How great is their audacity is evidenced by the words of Satan, recorded by the prophet: "I will ascend into heaven." [6] He attacked our first parents in paradise; he assailed the prophets; he beset the Apostles in order, as the Lord says in the Gospel, that he might sift them as wheat.[7] Nor was he abashed even by the presence of Christ our Lord Himself. His insatiable desire and unwearied diligence St. Peter therefore expressed when he said: "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion goeth about, seeking whom he may devour." [8]

But it is not Satan alone that tempts men, for sometimes a host of demons combine to attack an individual. This that evil spirit confessed, who, having been asked his name by Christ, replied, "My name is legion"; [9] that is to say, a multitude of demons, tormented their unhappy victim. And of another demon it is written: "He taketh with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man is made worse than the first." [10]

There are many who, because they do not feel the assaults of devils against them, imagine that the whole matter is fictitious; nor is it surprising that such persons are not attacked by devils, to whom they have voluntarily surrendered themselves. They

[6] Is. xiv. 13.
[7] Luke xxii. 31.
[8] 1 Pet. v. 8.
[9] Mark v. 9; Luke viii. 30.
[10] Matt. xii. 45.

possess neither piety nor charity, nor any virtue worthy of a Christian; hence they are entirely in the power of the devil, and there is no need of any temptation to overcome them, since their souls have already become his willing abode.

But those who have dedicated themselves to God, leading a heavenly life upon earth, are the chief objects of the assaults of Satan. Against them he harbors bitterest hatred, laying snares for them each moment. Sacred Scripture is full of examples of holy men who, in spite of their firmness and resolution, were perverted by his violence or fraud. Adam, David, Solomon, and others, whom it would be tedious to enumerate, experienced the violent and crafty cunning of demons, which neither human prudence nor human strength can overcome. Who, then, can deem himself sufficiently secure in his own resources? Hence the necessity of offering to God pure and pious prayer, that He suffer us not to be tempted above our strength, but make issue with temptation, that we may be able to bear it.[11]

But should any of the faithful, through weakness or ignorance, feel terrified at the power of the devils, they are to be encouraged, when tossed by the waves of temptation, to take refuge in this harbor of prayer. For however great the power and pertinacity of Satan, he cannot, in his deadly hatred of our race, tempt or torment us as much, or as long as he pleases; but all his power is governed by the control and permission of God. The example of Job is very well known. Satan could have touched nothing belonging to him, if God had not said to the devil: "Behold, all that he hath is in thy hand"; whilst on the other hand, had not the Lord added: "Only put not forth thy hand upon his person," Job with his children and possessions, would have been at once destroyed by the devil. So restricted is the power of demons, that without the permission of God, they could not even enter into the swine mentioned by the Evangelists.[12]

MEANING OF TEMPTATION

To understand the meaning of this Petition, it is necessary to say what *temptation* signifies here and also what it is *to be led into temptation.*

[11] 1 Cor. x. 13.
[12] Matt. viii. 31; Mark v. 12; Luke viii. 32.

To tempt is to sound a person in order that by eliciting from him what we desire, we may extract the truth. This mode of tempting does not apply to God; for what is there that God does not know? "All things are naked and open to his eyes." [13]

Another kind of tempting implies more than this, inasmuch as it may have either a good or a bad purpose. Temptation has a purpose, when someone's worth is tried, in order that when it has been tested and proved he may be rewarded and honored, his example proposed to others for imitation, and all may be incited thereby to the praises of God. This is the only kind of tempting that can be found in God. Of it there is an example in Deuteronomy: "The Lord your God tries you, that it may appear whether you love him or not." [14]

In this manner God is also said to tempt His own, when He visits them with want, disease, and other sorts of calamities. This He does to try their patience, and to make them an example of Christian virtue. Thus we read that Abraham was tempted to immolate his son, by which fact he became a singular example of obedience and patience to all succeeding times.[15] Thus also is it written of Tobias: "Because thou wast acceptable to God, it was necessary that temptation should prove thee." [16]

Men are tempted for a bad purpose, when they are impelled to sin or destruction. To do this is the work of the devil, for he tempts men with a view to deceive and precipitate them into ruin, and he is therefore called in Scripture, *the tempter*.[17] At one time, stimulating us from within, he employs the agency of the affections and passions of the soul. At another time, assailing us from without, he makes use of external things, as of prosperity, to puff us up with pride, or of adversity, to break our spirits. Sometimes he has for his emissaries and assistants abandoned men, particularly heretics, who, sitting in the chair of pestilence, scatter the deadly seeds of bad doctrines, thus unsettling and precipitating headlong those persons who draw no line of distinction between vice and virtue and are of themselves prone to evil.

[13] Hebr. iv. 13.
[14] Deut. xiii. 3.
[15] Gen. xxii. 1.
[16] Tob. xii. 13.
[17] Matt. iv. 3.

MEANING OF THE WORDS "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION"

We are said to be *led into temptation* when we yield to temptations. Now this happens in two ways. First, we are lead into temptation when, yielding to suggestion, we rush into that evil to which we are tempted. No one is thus led into temptation by God; for to no one is God the author of sin, nay, "He hates all who work iniquity";[18] and accordingly we also read in St. James: "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted of God; for God is not a tempter of evils."[19]

Secondly, we are said to be lead into temptation by him who, although he himself does not tempt us nor co-operate in tempting us, yet does not prevent us from being tempted or from being overcome by temptations when he is able to prevent these things. In this manner God, indeed, suffers the good and the pious to be tempted, but does not leave them unsupported by His grace. Sometimes, however, we fall, being left to ourselves by the just and secret judgment of God, in punishment of our sins.

God is also said to lead us into temptation when we abuse, to our destruction, His blessings, which He has given us as a means of salvation; when, like the prodigal son, we squander our Father's substance, living riotously and yielding to our evil desires. In such a case we can say what the Apostle has said of the law: "The commandment that was ordained to life, the same was found to be unto death to me."[20]

Of this an opportune example is Jerusalem, as we learn from Ezechiel. God had so enriched that city with every sort of embellishment, that He said of it by the mouth of the prophet: "Thou wast perfect through my beauty, which I had put upon thee."[21] Yet, Jerusalem, favored with such an abundance of divine gifts, was so far from showing gratitude to God, from whom she had received and was still receiving so many favors, was so far from making use of those heavenly gifts for the attainment of her own happiness, the end for which she had received them, that having cast away the hope and idea of deriving spiritual profit from them,

[18] Ps. v. 5.
[19] James i. 13.
[20] Rom. vii. 10.
[21] Ezech. xvi. 14.

she, most ungrateful to God her Father, was content to enjoy her present abundance with a luxury and riotousness which Ezechiel describes at considerable length in the same chapter. Wherefore those whom God permits to convert into instruments of vice the abundant opportunities of virtuous deeds which He has afforded them, are equally ungrateful to Him.

But we ought carefully to notice a certain usage of Sacred Scripture, which sometimes denotes the permission of God in words which, if taken literally, would imply a positive act on the part of God. Thus in Exodus we read: "I will harden the heart of Pharoah";[22] and in Isaias: "Blind the heart of this people";[23] and the Apostle to the Romans writes: "God delivered them up to shameful affections, and to a reprobate sense."[24] In these and other similar passages we are to understand, not at all any positive act on the part of God, but His permission only.[25]

IN THIS PETITION WE DO NOT ASK FREEDOM FROM ALL TEMPTATION

These observations having been premised, it will not be difficult to understand the object for which we pray in this Petition. We do not ask to be totally exempt from temptation, for human life is one continued temptation. Moreover this state of probation is useful and advantageous to man. Temptation teaches us to know ourselves, that is, our own weakness, and to humble ourselves under the powerful hand of God; and by fighting manfully, we expect to receive a never-fading crown of glory: "for he that striveth for the mastery is not crowned, except he strive lawfully."[26] "Blessed is the man," says St. James, "that endureth temptation; for when he hath been proved, he shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love him."[27] If we are sometimes hard pressed by the temptation of the enemy, it will also cheer us to reflect, "that we have a High-priest

[22] Ex. iv. 21.
[23] Is. vi. 10.
[24] Rom. i. 26.
[25] See Iraen. l. 4. c. haer., c. 48; Tert., l. 2. cont. Marc. 14; Aug., l. de praed. et gratia, c. 5; de praedest. sanct., c. 9; l. de gratia et lib. arb., cc. 21-23; St. Thomas, Ia. IIae. q. 87. 2; IIa. IIae. Q. 15.
[26] 2 Tim. ii. 5.
[27] James i. 12.

to help us, who can have compassion on our infirmities, having been tempted himself in all things." [28]

WHAT WE PRAY FOR IN THIS PETITION

What, then, do we pray for in this Petition? We pray that the divine assistance may not forsake us, lest having been deceived by the artifice of the wicked one; or worsted in the contest, we should yield to temptation; and that the grace of God may be at hand to succor us when our strength fails, to refresh and invigorate us in our trials.

We should, therefore, implore the divine assistance, in general, against all temptations, and especially when assailed by any particular temptation. This we find to have been the conduct of David, under almost every species of temptation. Against lying, he prays in these words: "Take not thou the word of truth utterly out of my mouth"; [29] against covetousness: "Incline my heart unto they testimonies, and not to covetousness"; [30] and against the vanities of this life, and the allurements of concupiscence, he prays thus: "Turn away my eyes, that they may not behold vanity." [31]

We pray, therefore, that we yield not to evil desires, and be not wearied in enduring temptation; that we deviate not from the way of the Lord; that in adversity, as in prosperity, we preserve equanimity and fortitude; that God may never deprive us of His protection. Finally, we pray that God may crush Satan beneath our feet.

REFLECTIONS WHICH SHOULD ACCOMPANY THIS PETITION

The pastor ought next to admonish the faithful concerning the chief thoughts and reflections that should accompany this prayer.

[28] Heb. iv. 15.
[29] Ps. cxviii. 43.
[30] Ps. cxviii. 36.
[31] Ps. cxviii. 37.

1. DISTRUST OF SELF AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD

It will, then, be found most efficacious, when offering this Petition that, remembering our weakness, we distrust our own strength; and, that, placing all our hopes of safety in the divine goodness and relying on the divine protection, we encounter the greatest dangers with undaunted courage, calling to mind particularly the many persons animated with such hope and resolution who were delivered by Almighty God from the very jaws of Satan.

When Joseph was assailed by the criminal solicitations of a wicked woman, did not God rescue him from the imminent danger, and exalt him to the highest degree of glory?[32] Did He not preserve Susanna, when beset by the ministers of Satan, and on the point of being made the victim of an iniquitous sentence? Nor should the divine interposition in her behalf excite our surprise; for "her heart," says the Scripture, "trusted in God."[33] How exalted the praise, how great the glory of Job, who triumphed over the world, the flesh, and the devil! There are on record many similar examples to which the pastor should refer, in order to exhort with earnestness his pious hearers to this hope and confidence.

2. CONFIDENCE IN CHRIST

The faithful should also reflect under whose standard they fight against the temptations of the enemy; they should remember that their leader is no less a person than Christ the Lord, who was victorious in the same combat. He overcame the devil; He is that "stronger man" mentioned in the Gospel, who, "coming upon the strong armed man," overcame him, deprived him of his arms, and stripped him of his spoils. Of Christ's victory over the world, we read in St. John: "Have confidence: I have overcome the world;"[34] and in the Apocalypse, He is called "the conquering lion,"[35] and it is said of

[32] Gen. xxix. 7.
[33] Dan. xiii. 61.
[34] John xvi. 33.
[35] Apoc. v. 5.

Him that He went forth conquering that He might conquer, because by His victory He has given power to others to conquer.

The Epistle of St. Paul to the Hebrews abounds with the victories of holy men, "who by faith conquered kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions," etc.[36] While we read of such achievements, we should also take into account the victories which are every day won by men eminent for faith, hope, and charity, in their interior and exterior conflicts with the devil,—victories so numerous and so signal, that, were we spectators of them, we should deem no event of more frequent occurrence, none of more glorious issue. It was with reference to such defeats of the evil spirits that St. John wrote: "I write unto you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God abideth in you, and you have overcome the wicked one."[37]

How Temptation is Overcome

We must, however, remember that Satan is overcome not by indolence, sleep, wine, revelling, or lust; but by prayer, labor, watching, fasting, continence, and chastity. "Watch ye and pray, that ye enter not into temptation,"[38] is, as we have already said, the admonition of our Lord. They who make use of these weapons in the conflict are sure to put the enemy to flight; for the devil flees from those who resist him.[39]

Victory over Temptation is due to God

But from the consideration of these victories achieved by holy men, let no one indulge feelings of self-complacency, nor flatter himself that, by his own single unassisted exertions, he is able to withstand the temptations and hostile assaults of the devil. This is not within the power of human nature, nor within the capacity of human frailty.

The strength by which we lay prostrate the satellites of Satan comes from God, "who maketh our arms as a bow of

[36] Heb. xi. 33.
[37] 1 John ii. 13.
[38] Matt. xxvi. 41.
[39] James iv. 7.

brass; by whose aid the bow of the mighty is overcome, and the weak are girt with strength; who giveth us the protection of salvation; whose right hand upholdeth us:" [40] "who teacheth our hands to war, and our fingers to battle." [41] Hence to God alone must thanks be given for victory, since it is only through His guidance and help that we are able to conquer. To this we are exhorted by the example of the Apostle. "Thanks to God," he says, "who hath given us the victory, through our Lord Jesus Christ." [42] The voice from heaven, mentioned in the Apocalypse, also proclaims God to be the author of our victories: "Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ; because the accuser of our brethren is cast forth; and they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb." [43] The same book declares that the victory obtained over the world and the flesh belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, when it says: "They shall fight with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them." [44] But enough has now been said on the cause and the manner of conquering temptation.

THE REWARDS WHICH AWAIT OUR VICTORIES OVER TEMPTATION

When these things have been explained, the pastor should instruct the faithful concerning the crowns prepared by God, and the eternal and superabundant rewards reserved for those who conquer. There are many passages in the Apocalypse bearing on the subject which it will be well to quote. Thus we read: "He that shall overcome shall not be hurt by the second death;" [45] and in another place: "He that shall overcome, shall thus be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, and I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." [46] A little after, our divine Lord Himself thus addresses John: "He that

[40] 1 Kings ii. 4.
[41] Ps. xvii. 35.
[42] 1 Cor. xv. 57.
[43] Apoc. xii. 10.
[44] Apoc. xvii. 14.
[45] Apoc. ii. 11.
[46] Apoc. iii. 5.

shall overcome, I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God; and he shall go out no more;" [47] and again: "To him that shall overcome, I will give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome, and am set down with my Father in his throne." [48] Finally, having unveiled the glory of the saints, and the never-ending bliss which they shall enjoy in heaven, he adds, "He that shall overcome shall possess these things." [49]

Sermon

Lead Us Not Into Temptation, But Deliver Us From Evil. Amen

BY THE REV. L. RULAND, D.D.

I pray not that thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from evil.—John xvii. 15.

INTRODUCTION

These words form part of the beautiful prayer, recorded by St. John, in which our Lord, just before His Passion, commended His beloved Apostles to His Heavenly Father's care. He prayed that God's blessing and protection might be with them, for He foresaw that they would have to encounter trials, conflicts, doubts and despondency. The surest means of delivering them from all opposition would have been to remove them from this world to the abode of peace and everlasting joy. But such was not our Divine Lord's intention; they were to be His witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the uttermost parts of the earth (Acts i. 8); and therefore they must undergo warfare and persecution, although their Heavenly Father would preserve them from ultimate defeat. Our Divine Saviour wishes to provide for us as He provided for them; the powers of evil will assail us in full force, but will not be able to tear us away from

[47] Apoc. iii. 12.
[48] Apoc. iii. 21.
[49] Apoc. xxi. 7.

the Kingdom of God, for His Fatherly goodness will watch over us until He sees fit to transplant us to the Heavenly abode of peace. Hence we are to pray: "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil." We are entitled to pray thus, for we know that we are chosen and predestined to glory (Eph. i. 4-7); delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His Blood, the remission of sins (Col. i. 13, 14). Through His Blood—this is the price of our Redemption from evil. In this life we shall never appreciate fully the value of this ransom; our feeble intellect cannot grasp the mystery of our Redemption, nor can our hearts realize the intensity of our Saviour's love. We must, however, do our best to thank Him. The Crucifix is the token of our Redemption; let us never look at it without raising our hearts in gratitude to Him: It is the record of His love, which we can never contemplate enough, and from it we may derive all the wisdom that we require, in order to live and die happily.

SIN IS THE CHIEF EVIL FROM WHICH WE ASK DELIVERANCE

Let us to-day fix our eyes on our Redeemer's Cross. It rises conspicuous on the hill of Golgotha, with the thieves' crosses to the right and left. The view of the city is hidden by an unusual darkness, but the three crosses can be seen plainly. Roman soldiers are keeping back the crowd of onlookers, who have grown silent since the inexplicable gloom came down over Jerusalem, and their voices are hushed, only here and there a coarse jest is uttered by some one in the pay of the Council. Close to the Cross stand our Lady and St. John, and near them is a group of women, who care nothing for the scorn of the hostile mob; all their thoughts are centered on the pitiable spectacle before them. Their gaze is fixed on their crucified Lord, and they cannot refrain from tears. The garments, whose touch sufficed to heal the sick, have been roughly torn off, and lots were cast for His cloak. His Body, bleeding from many wounds, is stretched out on

the Cross, the unnatural position causing intense agony. He is parched with fever, and His countenance reveals His mental anguish, for, as He hangs there, He beholds the hideous character of sin more plainly than any human being has ever done, and revolts against it with all the spotless purity of His soul. Heaven with its host of ministering spirits is veiled from Him during the dreadful hour when evil triumphs, and no sound but cries of ridicule proceeds from the crowd of spectators. At last a faint complaint is heard: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" Our Saviour's suffering had reached its limit, and could go no further. Let us bow down in humble adoration, and forbear to search into its causes. If the Crucifixion had not been followed by the Resurrection, we should regard these words as a cry of despair, and see nothing mysterious in them. In that case we should have no Redeemer. But we believe that He who has suffered and complained was in truth the Son of God, our Saviour. It is clear that what caused the death of the Son of God on Calvary, and what reduced Him to the lowest depth of abandonment was indeed an evil, in comparison with which all other misfortunes are mere trifles. When you ask God to deliver you from evil, you probably mean sickness and death, tempest and pestilence; but our Lord would not have suffered so much to deliver you from these things; the evil from which He delivers us is sin.

When on a starlit night we look up at the heavens, the longer we gaze, the greater is the number of planets revealed to our sight, and we feel impelled to exclaim with the Psalmist: "O Lord our God, how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth!"

The stars of heaven follow their appointed course to the glory of their Creator, and do not deviate from the orbit assigned them by Divine Wisdom. In comparison with the vastness of the universe man is infinitely small, and the years of his life are as it were a mere breath in comparison with the duration of the heavenly bodies, and yet he occupies a unique position, since to him the Creator imparted a reflection of His own nature, bidding him fulfill his destiny by co-oper-

ating freely with the Divine Will. To do this, he must be capable also of resisting and thwarting that will, and Adam exerted this power when he committed the first sin and brought a tendency to evil upon all his posterity. Resistance to the will of God is sin, the greatest evil in the world, because it is opposed to our supreme Lord and Creator. Sin is something so horrible that we cannot fathom it, for to realize the whole malignity of sin would be possible only if we could realize the greatness of God, against whose majesty sin is a rebellion. Therefore, St. Paul speaks of the "mystery of iniquity" working among men.

THE CAUSE OF TEMPTATION

Sin is then the real evil from which we pray to be delivered, and temptation, into which we beg our heavenly Father not to lead us, is temptation to sin. This is the greatest danger threatening us in our earthly life. Let us see whence it comes, and how we can escape it, or at least pass through it unscathed. Does temptation come from God, since we ask Him not to lead us into it? No, my brethren, this point is settled once for all by St. James, who writes: "Let no man, when he is tempted, say that he is tempted by God. For God is not a tempter of evils, and He tempteth no man; but every man is tempted by his own concupiscence, being drawn away and allured. Then when concupiscence hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin; but sin, when it is completed, begetteth death. Do not err, therefore, my dearest Brethren" (James i. 13-16). Let us make no mistake about it; temptation proceeds, not from God, but from the corrupt desires of the flesh. In irrational beasts the impulses of nature are controlled by law and time, but in man they are always alive; for man has will and reason wherewith to hold them in check. There can be no peace and harmony between our sensual impulses and our intellectual faculties, and will and reason must be ever on the alert, if man, the lord of creation, is not to fall into the lowest and most degrading slavery, and become bound with the fetters of sensuality. Our natural instincts are good when they are guided

and governed by reason and will; for God, who tempts no man, has implanted them in us, so that we may use them in an orderly fashion for the purposes that He ordains. We are only too apt to be carried away by the momentary desire to gratify our natural impulses, and to listen to their allurements, when it is unnecessary for us to do so, and even when they are directly opposed to reason and God's law. Sensuality then rages like a fire, consuming, not preserving life, and those who wish "to see something of life," as they say, soon have that wish gratified. Therefore, "watch ye and pray, that you enter not into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi. 41). In these simple and yet solemn words our Lord states and solves the difficult problem regarding the incessant warfare between our human nature and God's law. He shows us the way to find peace. It is not enough to be vigilant, if we are to escape the dangers of this life. Even the Apostles slept on the Mount of Olives, and we are only too likely to follow their example. Nor is it enough to pray, if our prayer is not accompanied by any exertion on our part, and to expect miraculous help from above would be rank presumption. No; victory over temptation and the power of sin is to be found in earnest efforts combined with humble prayer to our merciful Father in Heaven, or, in other words, in the active life of faith.

MEANS OF OVERCOMING TEMPTATION

Watchfulness and prayer require to be taught, and all true education should aim at showing children how to keep watch over their lower instincts besides encouraging and developing all their good qualities and training them to listen to the voice of conscience. This is not, however, enough to enable them to conquer all the dangers and temptations of life, and a more powerful protection is needed than human vigilance and wisdom can supply. This is the protection of God, which David extols so highly, saying: "Thou art my upholder and my refuge; my God, in Him will I hope. . . . He shall overshadow thee with His shoulders, and under His wings shalt thou trust.

. . . He hath given His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Ps. xc). How can we secure this protection? Only by means of prayer,—a life of prayer, not an occasional cry for assistance in time of need. Trouble may teach those to pray who would otherwise neglect prayer altogether, but we do not know what value such appeals have in God's sight. Of course it is better that a man should be driven by distress to have recourse to God, than that he should forget Him completely, and we know nothing of God's attitude towards individuals and their petitions, but many people have quite a mistaken opinion of God if they neglect religion as long as all goes well with them, and then pray with all imaginable fervor in times of sickness or distress, saying that if there is a God in heaven, He is bound to help them. Let us not forget that Jesus Christ, who by example and precept taught us how to pray, even in the hour of His agony in the Garden prayed conditionally: "Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. xxvi. 39). This prayer was not granted in the sense intended by our Saviour's human nature.

If we are to have any claim upon God's help in temptation, and if we are to pray aright in hours of trial, we must be accustomed to pray. Unhappily at the present day many people have lost the habit of prayer. Family prayer is seldom offered, and every paltry excuse is considered good enough to justify non-attendance at Holy Mass, even in the case of those who are far from wishing to be considered unbelievers. Excursions are arranged on Sunday at an hour that generally involves missing Mass. People tell us that we can pray just as well in the woods and fields, but is this true? Once I asked a friend how often he had really prayed in a wood, and he had to confess "Never." Those who refuse to follow the ordinary paths of religious observance are not likely to devise extraordinary methods for themselves. Modern education is always trying to find some new plan of inculcating morality, but let us acknowledge that there is nothing like prayer. Nowadays we are told that the young should have their eyes opened to all sexual secrets and be put on their guard against dangers

underlying such matters. I must acknowledge that there are two advantages in this system: It is better for the necessary information to be given seriously and in a dignified way, than for it to be picked up secretly from bad companions. Moreover, in some cases bad habits are caused by ignorance. But still instruction is not a panacea in such things; and knowledge may fail to afford any protection. Nothing but a strengthening of the willpower can really avert a fall. Let me, my Brethren, ask you to consider a parable derived from medical experience. We know that many diseases are due to very minute bacilli, which gain admittance to our bodies without our being aware of their presence. The knowledge of this fact inspires many people with boundless fear of infection. Could this fear be cured by circulating diagrams and descriptions of bacilli? Certainly not; nor is it necessary, for science teaches us that a healthy body is able to resist all these disease germs. The same thing is true of morality. We are all assailed by innumerable dangers and temptations, but if our minds are healthy, and our will strong to resist and control our lower instincts, and if we have learnt how to derive strength by prayer, then evil may indeed assail us, but it will not subdue us; like the waves it may dash itself against the cliffs, only to fall back powerless, and our peace of mind will remain undisturbed, for "God is faithful, who will not suffer us to be tempted above that which we are able; but will make also with temptation issue, that we may be able to bear it" (1 Cor. x. 13).

DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH WE SHOULD MAKE THIS PRAYER

This preservation from falling into temptation is deliverance from evil. The Sixth and Seventh Petitions are most closely connected. At the beginning of our meditation we spoke of the nature of evil, and acknowledged our inability to comprehend it fully. We stood, as it were, aghast at the mysterious malice of evil, and found that only the sight of our dear Saviour on the Cross could give us an idea of the enormity of sin. The necessary consequence of sin is exclusion from the contemplation of God, and eternal damnation is the greatest, or, rather, the only

true evil that can overtake us. This evil is essentially and inseparably connected with sin. It would be quite wrong to suppose that the condemnation of a sinner was something accidental, that God ordained should be a result of sin, just as here on earth a penalty may be inflicted that has no inherent connection with the offense. No; condemnation for grievous sin is of the very essence of sin itself. Deliberate rebellion against God involves eternal exclusion from His love; and here we perceive the mystery of evil in all its fearful extent. But let us not despair. Contrasted with it is the mystery of grace; and though we considered the horrible abyss of sin, when we thought of Christ's death on the Cross, we can recognize the mystery of love and grace much more clearly in the light of His triumphant suffering. Once for all He accomplished our release from sin and hell; He saved us from eternal death and made us children of God and heirs of Heaven, "for God so loved the world as to give His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting" (John iii. 16).

With well-grounded confidence we may pray to be delivered from evil, if we are firmly resolved not to receive the grace of God in vain, but to co-operate loyally with it. Our chief anxiety must be deliverance from sin, and it is for this that we pray; but our merciful Father allows us to pray also for release from the temporal evils of life. God may seem not to hear these requests, but we can be sure that He will not try us beyond our powers of endurance, but will turn all the sufferings of this life into channels of grace, and at the last day the Lord, the just Judge, will give the crown of victory to all who have fought a good fight, and kept the faith.

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TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

PRIDE AND HUMILITY

TEXT

Everyone that exalteth himself, shall be humbled: and he that humbleth himself, shall be exalted.—Luke xviii. 14.

Analysis

Introduction. The parable related in the Gospel just read was uttered by our Lord perhaps during the last week of His mortal life. It was evidently addressed to the Pharisees, and intended to correct their pride, and show the utter hatefulness in God's sight of that abominable vice of which the sect of the Pharisees afforded the most striking illustration.

At the same time the parable makes manifest God's great love of humility. Publicans were regarded everywhere among the Jews as the supremest type of sinners, as oppressors of the poor, as enemies of their own nation, as consorters with the Gentiles and the bitter foes of God's people. And yet, in spite of his many sins, this publican of the parable, on account of his humility, was declared just by Christ rather than the proud Pharisee who externally and officially was supposed to be the zealous defender of the interests of God among the chosen people.

I. **Pride.** 1. Pride is an inordinate opinion and love of one's own excellence, making a man consider himself greater than he really is, and desire to be so esteemed by others. The excellence in question may be any good that man possesses, whether it be piety, dignity, riches, health, beauty, knowledge, or the like. 2. There are two degrees of pride: (a) the arrogating to one's self of the cause and source of one's own excellence to the exclusion of God; (b) the glorying in one's own excellence, as though it had not been received from God. 3. Pride was the beginning of all sin, since through it the angels and our first parents fell (Ecclus. x. 15; Tobias iv. 14), and it is the root of many vices, such as: (a) *vain glory,* which is the inordinate desire of making known one's own excellence or achievements (Matt. xxiii. 5); (b) *boasting, i.e.,* the advertising of one's own performances in order to win the esteem and praise of men (which, however, usually has just the opposite effect with all persons of sound judgment and good taste); (c) *hypocrisy,* which consists in pretending to be virtuous in order to attract the esteem of men; (d) *ambition, i.e.,* an immoderate desire of honors, distinctions, greatness and glory, to gain which one is inclined to resort to unlawful means, such as plots, hatred, injustice, insatiable seeking after riches, etc.; (e) *contempt* of others; (f) *anger;* (g) *revenge;* (h) *obstinacy* in maintaining one's own opinions; (i) *insubordination,* which consists in wilful disobedience, contempt of authority, etc. 4. The malice of pride is in this that by it the creature usurps the place of the Creator and thus sins against the First Commandment. Thus pride is most hateful to God, who punishes it by permitting the proud to fall into the lowest sins and vices, and even at times to incur great temporal misfortunes.

II. **Humility.** 1. Humility is a virtue by which, being conscious of our nothingness, we look upon all our excellence as coming from God. This virtue, therefore, does not consist in things merely external, as speaking disparagingly of one's self, but in actual consciousness of our own impotence and lowli-

ness when left to ourselves. 2. Hence humility possesses the following elements: (a) the realization that all we possess, whether in the order of nature or of grace, comes from God, and that we are essentially dependent upon Him in all things, and in constant need of His help (Gal. vi. 3; 2 Cor. iii. 5); (b) charitableness in our judgments of and in our dealings with our neighbor; (c) avoidance of praise and the applause of men, love of self-abasement and mortification. 3. The necessity of humility is seen in this: (a) that it is the foundation of all other virtues, because without it the other virtues one may possess are not acceptable to God, whereas with it even one's vices may become an occasion of repentance and of the showing of mercy, as in to-day's parable; (b) that it is the source of grace, because God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble (James iv. 6); (c) that our Lord has commanded humility as an indispensable virtue (Matt. xviii. 3).

Exhortation. 1. Pride carries with it its own downfall, because it is hateful to God and to man. It is lawful, however, to encourage others by the example of our good works, provided we avoid ostentation and always have the intention of giving glory to God (Matt. v. 16). 2. Humility brings its own blessings, is universally loved and admired, and unconsciously reveals the excellence it strives to conceal (Matt. v. 15). 3. Let us pray then for humility, and, out of a realization of our own nothingness and of God's goodness, try to cultivate it in our lives and actions.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part I

(See Sunday after Christmas in Dogmatic Series and 5th Sunday after Easter in this Series.)

Sermons

The Virtue of Humility

BY THE REV. FERDINAND HECKMANN, O.F.M.

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus; who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross.—Phil. ii. 5-8.

INTRODUCTION

Every Christian as such is under an obligation to follow in the sacred footsteps of Jesus Christ, and to make His Life the model of his own. We are bound by our holy profession to imitate and practice those virtues which our Divine Saviour has taught us by word and example. St. Paul reminds us of this duty in to-day's Epistle, saying: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but emptied Himself taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of man, and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the Cross." In these words the Apostle exhorts us to imitate Christ in His humility, which was the most wonderful feature in the life of the Son of God on earth. That the omnipotent God should so humble Himself as to take the form of the lowest of the rational creatures that He has made, is an almost incredible marvel. The condescension, the lowering of Himself that is involved in it, altogether surpasses our power of comprehension. He could not have stooped so low unless He had been God. As God, in whom there is nothing little and imperfect, but everything is infinitely great and per-

fect, Christ could not humble Himself. Therefore, as the Apostle tells us, He emptied Himself of the glory and majesty of His Divinity, and took the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men in order that thus He might be able to humble Himself under the mighty Hand of God, and teach men the sublimity and dignity of this virtue. For Christ as man could and did practice the virtue of humility in the most perfect manner, and He exhorts us to learn this virtue especially of Him. "Take my yoke, *i.e.*, my Gospel, upon you," He says, "and learn of me, for I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). Out of all the virtues He came to teach us, He selects humility as that to the practice of which He binds us, and by which we are to become like to Him. And no wonder, for humility and submission is the foundation and very essence of His teaching. Subjection to God, subjection to all lawful authority, subjection of the intellect to the dogmas of Faith, subjection of the will to the laws of God, submission of the soul and body to God by due worship, is the religion of Jesus Christ. He who is not content with subjection cannot really be a good Christian, a true follower of the humble Christ; and no one can love subjection without humility. In humility Jesus Christ began His life and life-work, the redemption of mankind, in humility He made progress in them, and in humility He completed them. Since we can save our soul only in the way and by the means by which He redeemed it—by the virtue of humility, for we were saved by the infinite humiliations of the Godman, let us then consider the nature, motives, and necessity of this virtue.

NATURE OF HUMILITY

The word humility is derived from the Latin word humus. *i.e.*, the earth beneath us, thus reminding us of the lowness of our origin, and therefore signifies lowliness and submissiveness of mind, especially in regard to Almighty God. Humility is then a realization of our own lowness and nothingness before Almighty God. It is the result of the recognition of the Allness of God and the nothingness of ourselves.

St. Bernard defines it as the virtue by which a man becomes vile in his own eyes through a thorough knowledge of himself; and St. Thomas says that it is a virtue by which a man, considering his own defects, keeps himself in the lowest place according to his degree.

Humility is a virtue which resides partly in the understanding, and partly in the will; partly in the spirit, and partly in the heart. In the understanding the spirit of humility enlightened by Divine Faith convinces us that of ourselves we are nothing, that our very being and every qualification or good thing we possess, is all the gift of God, wholly dependent upon Him, and essentially subjected to His good pleasure, for "every best gift, and every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights" (James i. 17); that consequently we have neither right nor title in ourselves to any esteem or praise on account of any good thing we possess; for, says the Apostle, "what hast thou that thou hast not received? And if thou hast received, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?" (Cor. iv. 7). "We are not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God," says the same Apostle (2 Cor. iii. 5); and therefore, "if any man thinks himself to be something, whereas he is nothing, he deceiveth himself," says St. Paul (Gal. vi. 3); for "as the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you, unless you abide in me," says the Divine Saviour, "for without me you can do nothing" (John xv. 4). Hence all the praise and glory for the good things in us belongs to God rather than to us, according to the words of Holy Writ, that "to the King of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever" (1 Tim. i. 17).

HUMILITY CONVINCES US THAT ALL WE HAVE IS GOD'S GIFT

The virtue of humility teaches and convinces us that all the good things we possess are from God, rather than from ourselves; that we depend wholly upon the goodness of God, not only for having first bestowed them on us, but also for His continuing to pre-

serve them with us; and that whatever endeavors we use to procure or preserve any good thing can never succeed without God's assistance and benediction: nay, that we are so far from deserving any good thing from God, that of ourselves we deserve nothing but punishment and stripes on account of our sins. In consequence of these truths, humility teaches us to confide only in God, and not in ourselves nor in any ability of our own; to attribute all success to God alone, and to give Him all the praise and glory.

HUMILITY MAKES US REALIZE OUR MISERY AND NOTHINGNESS

Finally, humility fixing our attention upon what is truly our own, convinces us not only of our mere nothingness and incapacity, but also of our misery and sin; that instead of being able to keep God's law, if left to ourselves, we would run headlong into every kind of wickedness because "the wickedness of men is great upon earth, and all their heart is bent upon evil at all times" (Gen. vi. 5); and "the imagination and thought of man's heart are prone to evil from his youth" (Gen. viii. 21); "for the heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable" (Jer. xviii. 9); and out of it "proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false testimonies, and blasphemies" (Matt. xv. 19). Our strength and ability to save our souls is only from God by the assistance of His grace bestowed on us through the merits of Jesus Christ; for "our sufficiency is from God," as the Apostle tells us (2 Cor. iii. 6). Hence "it is God who worketh in us, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (Phil. ii. 13); and our confidence must always be in Him "that He who hath begun the good work in us, will perfect it unto the day of Christ Jesus" (Phil. i. 6). Even when we have done all things that are commanded us, we must say: "We are unprofitable servants; we have done that which we ought to do" (Luke xviii. 10). How detestable, therefore, it must be in the eyes of God proudly to presume upon our own abilities or deserts, and how justly He sets Himself against all such as do so, declaring by His Apostle that He resists the

proud, but gives grace to the humble. "The ancient giants did not obtain pardon for their sins, who were destroyed," says the Wise Man, "trusting to their own strength" (Ecclus. xvi. 8).

HUMILITY LEADS US TO SEEK GOD'S GLORY RATHER THAN OUR OWN

Humility residing in the heart and will makes us despise and condemn ourselves as having nothing of ourselves but misery and sin, and hence we are not only willing but desirous of being despised by others, and of suffering humiliations as being our due; for it is not enough to be conscious and convinced of our own vileness, or to esteem ourselves as nothing. We must acquiesce in and be satisfied with our own nothingness. Humility is not perfect until self is so obliterated that we are willing to be esteemed according to our deserts. When we can honestly say that what we look to in all our thoughts, words, and actions is not our own advantage and interest, but simply the honor of God, quite independently of what will further our own profit, then we may begin to thank God that we are in the way of humility.

If this is really the case, we shall not only esteem ourselves as vile, but we shall desire to be treated accordingly. We shall not shrink from being humbled in the eyes of men, but shall court humiliation, as it will be a satisfaction to us to be treated as we deserve. This is hard for human nature, but it is possible for all with the grace of God.

MOTIVES FOR PRACTICING HUMILITY

Not one of us can review his past life without finding therein motives enough and to spare for humbling himself before Almighty God. We must exclaim with the prophet: "We have sinned, we have done wickedly, we have revolted; to us belongeth shame and confusion of face" (Dan. ix. 5, 7). If ever we are inclined to think much of ourselves, we have only to look back on our past years; on the deliberate sins against charity, against truthfulness, against obedience, against purity; on the

pride, the selfishness, the self-will, the neglect of God that have stained our lives.

Besides the actual sins, how many infidelities to grace are resting upon us. God has been so liberal with His graces, and we have been so negligent in availing ourselves of them. How many more graces we might have earned if we had been faithful and had not wilfully turned aside from what God asked of us to follow our own will and good pleasure. What cause of humiliation lies in this for ourselves. If others who have perhaps lived and died in sin had had our graces, would they not have made far better use of them than we have? To us, O God, belongs indeed shame and confusion of face.

When, moreover, we look at what we are now, we find a fresh cause for humbling ourselves. We might have been Saints if we had been more faithful, and now we find ourselves the vilest of sinners. Our soul in the sight of God is disfigured by sin, as a body is by the ulcers and sores that spoil its natural beauty and comeliness. We are unworthy to appear in the presence of God and must exclaim with the royal Prophet: "Turn away Thy face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities" (Ps. i. 11).

In order to foster in ourselves the spirit of humility, we must not only look back upon our past life, but also look forward. When we must appear before our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ to be judged, what reason shall we then not have for shame and dismay. How can we who are full of sin and iniquity venture to face Him who sees through every disguise, and recognizes the true nature of every action? How can we meet Him who has witnessed our evil deeds hidden from the eyes of men, and wicked and uncharitable thoughts indulged in secret? When we think of that day, we must needs be humble. For nothing will then be such a cause of shame to us as our pride. Nothing will so turn away the face of our Judge from us in anger as our pride. If God abhors the proud, how can we look forward to that day without trembling? St. Teresa said that when she had the privilege of seeing our Blessed Lord in a vision, the prevailing thought in her mind was, what a terrible thing it would be if He were to be angry

with her. He will be angry with us unless we are, like Him, meek and humble of heart.

What will be the punishment of pride in the next world? The fire of hell, which was prepared for the devil and his angels simply and solely because of their pride. None will endure such misery as the proud; not the gluttonous, or the impure, or the covetous, except so far as their other vices fostered pride in them. If nothing else will make us humble, then at least the thought of the lowest hell, reserved for the proud, should conquer in us the hateful vice of pride.

HUMILITY NECESSARY FOR OBTAINING GRACE AND THE DIVINE FAVOR

No virtue is more necessary for obtaining salvation than humility. Without the grace of God it is absolutely impossible for us to save our soul; but, as the Scriptures tell us, God "resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble." "To whom shall I have respect," says Almighty God, "but to him that is poor and little, and of contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my words" (Is. lxvi. 2). Therefore the Wise Man admonishes us, saying, "The greater thou art, the more humble thyself in all things, and thou shalt find grace before God" (Ecclus. iii. 20). Pride is an insuperable bar to the entrance of grace into our soul, and as we can do nothing good in the sight of God without the assistance of His grace, we must have at least some degree of humility before we can do anything pleasing to Him. In proportion to our humility will be the grace given us, and the supernatural virtue to which we shall attain. The first thing, then, which we must do if we wish to please God and obtain His grace, is to humble ourselves in His sight.

However, humility is not only necessary to the obtaining of grace from God, but without it we are enemies of God. He resists the proud; that is, they have God fighting against them, and regarding them as His enemies. How awful a thing it is to have God for our enemy. It was this that rendered the devils for ever accursed. Lucifer, dazzled with his own beauty

and high perfections, forgot that he had received them from God, and presumed to set himself upon an equality with the Most High, saying in his heart: "I will ascend into Heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God, I will ascend above the height of the clouds, I will be like the Most High" (Is. xiv. 13, 14). On account of this arrogant pride, Lucifer and his fellow-angels were cast out of Heaven, while the humility of their subjection confirmed the holy Angels in the love of God, in perfect happiness for all eternity. If then pride could not permit those to remain in Heaven who were there, much less can those be admitted into Heaven who are not there, if they be not humble of heart. Humility, then, is a necessary condition of our entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven, for the gates which lead to it are both narrow and low, so we must bow down and humble ourselves if we wish to pass through them.

WITHOUT HUMILITY OUR PRAYERS ARE UNAVAILING

The most necessary and efficacious means to obtain the grace of God and salvation is prayer. We are all anxious that God should hear our prayers and grant us the petitions of our heart. He is always ready to do so. The obstacles are always on our side, and one of the chief of these, if not the principal one, is the lack of humility. If God resists the proud, He is not likely to hear their prayers; hence one of the first requisites of success in our prayers is that we should humble ourselves before God. Then, and not till then, will our prayers reach the ears of the Most High. The prayer of the proud Pharisee was rejected by God, while the prayer of the humble Publican was graciously heard by Him. "He hath regard to the prayer of the humble," says the Royal Prophet, "and He hath not despised their petition" (Ps. ci. 18). For "the prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds; and till it come high it will not be comforted, and will not depart till the Most High behold; and the Lord will not be slack," says the Wise Man (Ecclus. xxvi. 21).

PRAYER NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

We are all convinced of the necessity of Baptism and Penance for salvation; and this conviction is founded on the express and formal declaration of the Son of God. "Amen, amen, I say unto you, except a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (John iii. 5). And again, "Except you do penance, you shall all likewise perish" (Luke xiii. 5). These strong expressions contain the most unequivocal declarations of the necessity of these two means of salvation. Now the same Son of God uses the same mode of expression to show the necessity of humility; for when the disciples asked Him, saying: "Who thinkest thou is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven? Jesus calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen, I say to you, unless you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt. xviii. 1-4). "Pride is hateful before God; it is the beginning of all sin," says the Wise Man; "he that holdeth it shall be filled with maledictions, and it shall ruin him in the end" (Ecclus. x. 7, 15). Therefore old Tobias admonished his son, saying: "Never suffer pride to reign in thy mind, or in thy words, for from it all perdition took its beginning" (Tob. iv. 15). If then the vice of pride is the cause of eternal ruin and perdition, the opposite virtue of humility must be the cause of eternal salvation.

CONCLUSION

Let us then imitate our Divine Master and Model in the practice of this fundamental and most necessary virtue for our Christian life. We are predestined to be made conformable to the image of the Son of God. Nothing will so quickly render us conformed to the Divine beauty of the Son of God as humility. "Learn of Me," He says, "for I am meek and humble of heart." His image in us cannot be perfect as long as there

is present in our hearts any vestige of pride. But when humility shall have driven out the opposing vice of pride, then we become indeed like to God. We share the Divine beauty and are the object of the admiration of the holy Angels, and even of God Himself, who then speaks to the soul in the words of the Divine Lover in the Canticle of Canticles: "Thou art all fair, my beloved, and there is no spot in thee" (Cant. iv. 7). Yet only in Heaven will our humility be perfected, for only in Heaven shall we have a thorough knowledge of God's infinite perfections and a thorough knowledge of our own nothingness. The Angels and Saints in Heaven are described in Holy Writ as casting down their crowns before the throne of God, as falling on their faces and crying continually: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts." If the highest dignity and chiefest joy of the Angels and Saints is to be prostrate before the throne of God, we can never humble ourselves enough on earth, since those acts of humility will make our life the life of heaven, and will fill us with a joy which will be a foretaste of the joy and glory that awaits us in the realms of eternal bliss. Amen.

Pride

BY THE REV. W. GRAHAM

O God, I give thee thanks that I am not like the rest of men.—Luke xviii. 11.

INTRODUCTION

Pride must be a great evil since the Scriptures so persistently denounce and warn against it. Indeed, the whole life and teaching of Christ form a standing protest against it in every shape and form. The worst feature in this vice is that it is a subtle, spiritual sin often found, as in the case of Lucifer, conjoined with great gifts and high endowments, yet leading, if not checked, to direct opposition to God, withdrawal of our dependence on Him and the lawfully constituted authorities, spiritual and temporal, that represent Him. It is, therefore,

deservedly called the first of the seven deadly or capital sins that form part of the sad inheritance of the fall; and the great fight that we have all to wage against vice and sin is really the struggle to keep pride and its companion sins under. These sins are like smoldering volcanoes that may at any time burst into flame. Though commonly latent and rooted in every human heart, yet pride seldom in itself and apart from its consequences reaches the extent of a specific, grievous, mortal sin. It is only grievous sin when perfect, as, *e.g.*, when a person is so obstinately wrapped up in self, so intensely self-concentrated as to be prepared to break any law rather than submit to another having the right to require obedience in grave matters, that it expands into a mortal sin of pride. This is said to have been the sin of Lucifer, who was so dazzled with his own powers and excellencies as to refuse submission to his Lord and Creator. So, too, all the great heresiarchs, Arius, Luther, Calvin, and the rest, who clung obstinately to their own errors and opinions rather than yield to the authoritative teaching of God's infallible Church, were guilty of the sin of intellectual pride. Likewise, in every day life, when pride leads to such contempt for others as to make us loathe and detest them and consequently, perhaps, slander or otherwise do them great wrong, it assumes the form of a grave sin. It is more, however, as a corrupting and corrosive element of good works and qualities, as a habit and state of mind implying an unchristian and unchristlike disposition, that it is dangerous and effects so much evil. Pride acts in the heart as the silent forces of frost and damp and rust in nature. The hardest rocks and buildings gradually give way before them. Pride is a solvent of all characteristic Christian virtues. When a man becomes, as it were, his own center, his own idol, his own end, when honor and wealth and praise are his sole ambition in life, you may be sure that he is swayed not by the spirit of the Gospel, but by that "pride of life" equally condemned by St. John with the grosser sin of lust or impurity. It is the root and origin, the source and fountain-head of innumerable other sins—all radically opposed to the life and spirit and teaching of our Saviour. Atheism, infidelity, ambi-

tion, vain-glory, hypocrisy, presumption, and boasting all more or less originate and have their basis in pride.

PRIDE IS THEFT

Humility is the keystone of Christ's teaching; it is the very foundation of Christian ethics and doctrines. A "God emptying himself and taking the form of a servant" (Phil. ii. 7); lying in a manger as a shivering babe; growing up the reputed son of a common workman; and dying as a criminal on an infamous gibbet. His whole system of religion "unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Gentiles, foolishness" (1 Cor. i. 23). All this serves as a rebuke to our pride, reminding us that "God resisteth the proud, but to the humble he giveth grace" (1 Peter v. 5), and that "unless we become as little children we shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). And very justly, too, because God loves justice and truth; whereas pride, rightly understood, is an act of theft and of falsehood combined. To steal is to take, retain, and employ for our own use and benefit what belongs to another against his will. This is what the truly proud man does. He takes to himself and attributes to himself the merit and praise and gifts and blessings that come from and belong to Almighty God. All that we have or can have belongs first and foremost to Him, and, therefore, to boast of them or glory in them without reference to or dependence on the Giver of "every good and perfect gift" (James i. 17) is to appropriate what does not belong to us and an attempt to rob God of His glory. True, God bestows His favors upon us freely, gratuitously; but as a God of order, of fairness, with the implied condition that we should be grateful and dependent, *i.e.*, humble.

PRIDE IS A LIE

Pride is, moreover, a lie, a falsehood. It is boasting that we are and have what certainly we are not and have not. We absolutely are and have nothing outside the empty void from which we sprang. All else is the gift of God—often granted in and through the mere accident of birth, fortune, and posi-

tion. "For if thou hast received," says St. Paul, "why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?" (1 Cor. iv. 7). God loves humility, then, because He loves, as we ought to love, common truth and honesty. It was the absence of pride that formed the grandest of the most highly favored and gifted of human beings, our Blessed Lady: "Quia respexit humilitatem ancillae suae." Humble souls are truly great because they know their place under God and keep it. It is not that they are ignorant or unconscious of their gifts and endowments; but that they know their origin and relative worth. Humility is not by any means, therefore, a barren virtue. It lies at the root of all virtues; it is the admission of truth—the seeing ourselves, or at least endeavoring to see ourselves, as we really are, *i.e.*, beings dependent on God for the very breath we draw—weak, sinful, ignorant—ever in need of the help, the mercy, the forbearance, and the forgiveness of our Creator. Poor, helpless, and naked we all come into the world, and so shall we leave it.

CONCLUSION

Let us appreciate this truth now that it can be of use to us. Let us be honest and truthful—in other words, humble. If self-reliant and self-confident, it must be with dependence on God, remembering that if much is given to us much also is required, and that we must give an account of our stewardship, and that our divine Master will exact even down to the last farthing of what we owe. Let this be the lesson drawn from the story told in the Gospel of the day. Even apart from the perishable and often dangerous gifts of wealth, talent, health, and position, we can not boast or pride ourselves even in the higher moral gifts of virtue and good conduct. The penitent publican who had a bad record behind him grew suddenly better and more acceptable to God than the boasting self-conceited Pharisee, notwithstanding his previous record of temple-going and apparent virtue and good works. For "he that thinketh himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x. 12). "Not every one that sayeth, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. vii. 21).

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ELEVENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

PRAYER: ITS OBJECTS

TEXT

They bring to him one deaf and dumb, and they besought him that he would lay his hand upon him.—Mark vii. 32.

Analysis

Introduction. Passing through Decapolis, on His way from the neighborhood of Tyre and Sidon to the Lake of Genesareth, our Lord performed the miracle related in to-day's Gospel. Some charitable persons brought to Him a man both deaf and dumb, and implored Him to heal his pitiable afflictions. The Saviour immediately granted their petitions, and the sick man was made well.

From this incident we learn what are some of the objects of prayer, and to whom and for whom we should pray. It

is sometimes objected that we ought not to pray for earthly and temporal benefits; but the readiness with which our Lord granted the petition for the deaf mute shows that temporal favors are by no means beneath the things we should pray for. Again, it is often objected by non-Catholics that we should not direct our prayers to the Blessed Virgin, or the angels and saints, since these are incapable of interceding for us. But how obviously false and absurd this contention is we also learn from to-day's Gospel, as well as from many like incidents in the life of Christ, when, at the request of imperfect men, and often of sinners, miraculous favors were granted by the Saviour to others. How much more, therefore, will God be disposed to grant the petitions of those who are glorified with Him in heaven! Moreover, the miracle of this day's Gospel is a lesson to us that we should pray, not alone for our own needs, but also for the welfare and needs of our neighbor.

I. **What we should pray for.** 1. We may lawfully ask only those things that may be lawfully desired, namely, God and things that unite us to Him. 2. It is lawful to pray for temporal things, *i.e., for goods of soul,* such as knowledge, prudence; *for corporal goods,* such as life, health, strength, and the like; *for external goods,* such as riches, honors, power, and the like. But in asking for any temporal blessing, it is necessary to be mindful of two things: (a) the proper order of prayer, which means that our thoughts and desires should be concerned chiefly with heavenly things; (b) the proper end of prayer, which means that we should seek temporal favors only on condition that they are in conformity with God's will, and not a hindrance to our salvation. Those who have temporal goods should remember that these have been given to enable them to serve God better and to assist their neighbor. The only things we can pray for absolutely are God's glory and our own salvation.

II. **Whom we should pray for.** 1. We should pray for others in two ways, by way of petition, and by way of thanksgiving.

2. By way of petition we are bound to pray for all men without exception, asking for them, first, the things that concern their souls, and then, the things that pertain to their bodies. 3. In particular we should pray for the pastors of the Church; for our temporal rulers; for relatives, friends, benefactors; for the just, sinners, and enemies; for the souls in purgatory and those outside the Church. 4. By way of thanksgiving we should thank God in general for the blessings which He has bestowed on the human race, and in particular for the special graces and benefits conferred on the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

III. **Whom we should pray to.** 1. In the first place we ought to pray to God, *i.e.*, to the three Divine Persons. 2. Secondly, we should pray to the Blessed Virgin, who is the Mother of God, especially in the words of the Angelic Salutation, or *Hail Mary*. 3. Next we should pray to the saints in heaven, who are God's particular and crowned friends. 4. The difference between the prayers offered to God, and those addressed to the Blessed Virgin and the saints is that in praying to God we ask Him either to grant us blessings, or to deliver us from evil; whereas, in praying to His special friends, we simply ask that they join their prayers to ours, and intercede for us before God.

Exhortation. 1. In our prayers we should seek above all the needs of the soul, and especially the grace of final perseverance. 2. Our prayers should embrace our neighbor, as well as our own needs. 3. While praying to God, we should not fail to seek the intercession of the Blessed Virgin and the saints.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

What We Should Pray For

Under the head of each petition we shall point out in its proper place, what is, and what is not a proper object of prayer. Hence it will suffice here to remind the faithful in a general way that they ought to ask of God such things as are just and good, lest,

praying for what is not suitable, they may be answered in these words: "You know not what you ask." [1] Whatever it is lawful to desire, it is lawful to pray for, as is proved by our Lord's ample promise: "You shall ask whatever you will, and it shall be done unto you," [2] words which ensure all things to pious prayer.

I. SPIRITUAL GOODS

In the first place, then, the standard which should regulate all our wishes is that we desire above all else God, the Supreme Good. After God we should most desire those things which unite us most closely to Him; while those which would separate us from Him, or occasion that separation, should have no share in our affections.

2. EXTERNAL GOODS AND GOODS OF BODY

Taking, then, as our standard the supreme and perfect Good, we can easily infer how we are to desire and ask from God our Father those other things which are called goods. Goods which are called bodily, such as health, strength, beauty, and those which are external, such as riches, honors, glory, often supply matter and give occasion to sin, and, therefore, it is not always either pious or salutary to ask for them. We should pray for these goods of life only in so far as we need them, thus referring all to God. It cannot be deemed unlawful to pray for those things for which Jacob and Solomon prayed. "If," says Jacob, "he shall give me bread to eat and raiment to put on, the Lord shall be my God." [3] "Give me," says Solomon, "only the necessaries of life." [4]

But when we are supplied by the bounty of God with necessaries and comforts, we should not forget the admonition of the Apostle: "Let them that buy, be as if they possessed not, and those that use this world, as if they used it not; for the

[1] Matt. xx. 22.
[2] John xv.
[3] Gen. xxviii. 20.
[4] Prov. xxx. 8.

figure of this world passeth away;" [5] and again, "If riches abound, set not your hearts upon them." [6] God Himself teaches us that only the use and fruit of these things belong to us and that we are obliged to share them with others. If we are blessed with health and strength, if we abound in other external and corporal goods, we should recollect that they are given to us in order to enable us to serve God with greater fidelity, and as the means of lending assistance to the wants and necessities of others.

3. GOODS OF THE MIND

It is also lawful to pray for the goods and adornments of the mind, such as a knowledge of the arts and sciences, provided our prayers are accompanied with this condition, that the advantages which such learning affords serve to promote the glory of God and our own salvation.

The only thing which can be absolutely and unconditionally the object of our wishes, our desires, our prayers, is, as we have already observed, the glory of God, and, next to it, whatever can serve to unite us to that Supreme Good, such as faith and the fear and love of God, of which we shall treat at length when we come to explain the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer.

FOR WHOM WE OUGHT TO PRAY

The objects of prayer being known, the faithful are next to be taught for whom they are to pray. Prayer comprehends petition and thanksgiving; and we shall first treat of petition.

THE PRAYER OF PETITION SHOULD BE OFFERED FOR ALL

We are to pray for all mankind, without exception of enemies, nation, or religion; for every man, be he enemy, stranger, or infidel, is our neighbor, whom God commands us to love, and for whom, therefore, we should discharge a duty of love, which is prayer. To the discharge of this duty the Apostle

[5] 1 Cor. vii. 30, 31.
[6] Ps. lxi. 11.

exhorts when he says: "I desire that prayer be made for all men." [7] In such prayers we should first ask for those things that concern the spiritual interests of our neighbor, and next for what pertains to his temporal welfare.

THOSE FOR WHOM WE SHOULD ESPECIALLY OFFER OUR PETITIONS: I. PASTORS

Before all others our pastors have a right to our prayers, as we learn from the example of the Apostle in his Epistle to the Colossians, in which he asks them to pray for him, "that God may open unto him a door of speech," [8] a request which he also makes in his Epistle to the Thessalonians.[9] In the Acts of the Apostles, we also read that prayers were offered in the church without intermission for Peter.[10] St. Basil, in his work "On Morals," urges to a faithful compliance with this salutary obligation. "We must," he says, "pray for those who are charged with preaching the word of truth." [11]

2. RULERS OF OUR COUNTRY

In the next place, as the same Apostle teaches, we should pray for our rulers.

Who does not know what a singular blessing a people enjoy in public officials who are just and upright? We should, therefore, beseech God to make them such as they ought to be, fit persons to govern those who are subject to their authority.[12]

3. THE JUST

To offer up our prayers also for the good and pious is a practice sanctioned and supported by the authority of holy men. Even the good and the pious need the prayers of others. Providence has wisely ordained it so, in order that the just, realizing the necessity they are under of being aided by the

[7] 1 Tim. ii. 1.
[8] Col. iv. 3.
[9] 1 Thess. v. 25.
[10] Acts xii. 5.
[11] Basil., lib. Moral. Reg. 56. cap. 5; hom. in. Isaiam.
[12] See Tertull., Apol. c. 30; ad Scap. c. 2.

prayers of those who are inferior to them in sanctity, may not be inflated with pride.

4. ENEMIES AND THOSE OUTSIDE THE CHURCH

Our Lord has also commanded us, "to pray for those that persecute and calumniate us." [13] The practice of praying for those who are not within the pale of the Church, is, as we know on the authority of St. Augustine, of Apostolic origin.[14] We pray that the faith may be made known to infidels; that idolators may be rescued from the error of their impiety; that the Jews, emerging from the darkness with which they are encompassed, may arrive at the light of truth; that heretics, returning to soundness of mind, may be instructed in the true faith; and that schismatics may be united in the bond of true charity and may return to the communion of the Catholic Church from which they have separated. Many examples prove that prayers for such as these are very efficacious when offered from the heart. Instances occur every day in which God rescues individuals of every condition of life from the powers of darkness, and transfers them into the kingdom of His beloved Son, from vessels of wrath making them vessels of mercy. That the prayers of the pious have considerable influence in bringing about this happy result no one can reasonably doubt.

5. THE DEAD

Prayers for the dead that they may be liberated from the fire of purgatory are of Apostolic origin; but on this subject we have said enough when explaining the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.[15]

6. SINNERS

Those who are dead in sin derive little advantage from prayers and supplications. It is, however, the part of Chris-

[13] Matt. v. 44.

[14] See Aug., Epist. 10. ad Vital.; Cypr., de Orat. Dom.; Pope Celestine, Epist. 1. c. 11.

[15] Denis, lib. de Eccles. Hierarch. c. 6, 7; Pope Clement, ep. 1; lib. Constit. Apol.; Tertul., de Corona milit.; in exhort. ad castit.; in lib. de monog.; Cypr., ep. 66.

tian charity to offer up our prayers and tears for them, in order if possible to obtain their reconciliation with God.

With regard to the execrations uttered by holy men against the wicked, it is certain, from the teaching of the Fathers, that they are either prophecies of the evils which are to befall sinners or denunciations of the crimes of which they are guilty, that the sinner may be saved, but sin destroyed.[16]

THE OBJECTS OF PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING

In the second part of prayer we render most grateful thanks to God for the divine and immortal blessings which He has always bestowed, and still continues to bestow every day on the human race.

This duty we discharge especially when we give singular praises to God for the victory and triumph which the saints, aided by His goodness, have achieved over their domestic and external enemies.

THE ANGELICAL SALUTATION

To this sort of prayer belongs the first part of the Angelical Salutation, when used by us as a prayer: "Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee, blessed art thou among women." For in these words we render to God the highest praise and return Him most grateful thanks, because He has bestowed all His heavenly gifts on the most Holy Virgin; and at the same time we congratulate the Virgin herself on her singular privileges.[17]

To this form of thanksgiving the Church of God has wisely added prayers and an invocation addressed to the most holy Mother of God, by which we piously and humbly fly to her patronage, in order that, by her intercession, she may reconcile God to us sinners and may obtain for us those blessings which we stand in need of in this life and in the life to come. We, therefore, exiled children of Eve, who dwell in this vale of

[16] See Aug., de serm. Dom. in monte, lib. 1, cap. 22; serm. 109. de temp.
[17] See Aug., Ench. c. 100; 21 de civit. Dei, c. 24; lib. 20. contr. Faust, c. 21.

tears, should earnestly beseech the Mother of mercy, the advocate of the faithful, to pray for us sinners. In this prayer we should earnestly implore her help and assistance; for that she possesses exalted merits with God, and that she is most desirous to assist us by her prayers, no one can doubt without impiety and wickedness.[18]

TO WHOM WE SHOULD PRAY

That God is to be prayed to and His name invoked is the language of the law of nature, inscribed upon the tablet of the human heart. It is also the doctrine of Holy Scripture, in which we hear God commanding: "Call upon me in the day of trouble."[19] By the word "God," we mean the three Persons of the adorable Trinity.

We must also have recourse to the intercession of the saints who are in glory. That the saints are to be prayed to is a truth so firmly established in the Church of God, that no true Christian can experience a shadow of doubt on the subject. But as this point of Catholic faith was explained in its proper place, under a separate head, we refer the pastor and others to that place. To remove, however, the possibility of error on the part of the unlearned, it will be found useful to explain to the faithful the difference between the invocation of the saints, and the prayers which are offered to God.

GOD AND THE SAINTS ADDRESSED DIFFERENTLY

We do not address God and the saints in the same manner, for we implore God to grant us blessings or to deliver us from evils; while we ask the saints, since they are the friends of God, to take us under their patronage and to obtain for us from God whatever we need. Hence we make use of two different forms of prayer. To God, we properly say, "Have mercy on us," "Hear us"; but to the saints, "Pray for us."

[18] Aug. Serm. 18. de Sanctis; Ambr., on Luke i; Bern., hom. 3. in "Missus est."; Athan., in Ev. de Sancta Deipara; Aug., Serm. 2. de Annunt; Nazianz., in orat. de S. Cypriano.

[19] Ps. xlix. 15.

Still we may also ask the saints, though in a different sense, that they have mercy on us, for they are most merciful. Thus we may beseech them that, touched with the misery of our condition, they would interpose in our behalf their influence and intercession before the throne of God.

In the performance of this duty, it is strictly incumbent on all not to transfer to creatures the right which belongs exclusively to God. For instance, when we say the Our Father before the image of a saint we should bear in mind that we beg of the saint to pray with us and to obtain for us those favors which we ask of God, in the Petitions of the Lord's Prayer,—in a word, that he become our interpreter and intercessor with God. That this is an office which the saints discharge, we read in the Apocalypse of John the Apostle.[20]

Sermons

Intercessory Prayer in the Church

BY THE REV. THOMAS F. BURKE, C.S.P.

INTRODUCTION

Standing upon the shore of the St. Lawrence, my dear brethren, just at the edge of the city of Montreal, there is a small church atop of which rises a statue of the Blessed Virgin that faces the waters. Mary is represented as gazing out over the great river as if to protect those who sail upon its bosom, and at the same time her hands are outstretched toward heaven imploring that protection from the God who alone can give it. While I gazed upon this evidence of faith and love the thought came to me that this statue was typical of the attitude of the Church toward her children. She is always guiding them in the name of God and always making intercession for them before God who alone can answer her prayers. From the very beginning the Church has been thus solicitous for the welfare of those entrusted to her care. She thanks God; she petitions

[20] Apoc. viii. 3.

God; she implores His mercy upon us all. A thought, therefore, is this, worthy of our consideration, that we have in the prayers of the Catholic, the Universal Church, a powerful means of intercession which we should appreciate more than, I fear, we usually do.

VALUE OF THE CHURCH'S PRAYER

If we believe at all in prayer and its answer, surely we can see how valuable and far-reaching must be the petition that the Church, speaking for millions of souls, sends up to God. Prayer is the necessary concomitant of supernatural religion; and its possibility and necessity are denied only by those who question the existence of the supernatural. For us, therefore, who are blessed by God in that we are members of His true Church, prayer should be the most frequent act of our lives. Why is this? Consider what we believe. We believe, in accordance with the great facts of revelation, not that God is a being who stands apart and manifests no interest in the welfare of His intelligent creatures upon earth, but that He is One who has at heart the salvation of each soul; who is interested not merely in the general outcome of the universe but who also extends His hand of benediction and care over each particular human being. We believe the words of Jesus Christ: "Your Father knoweth you have need of all these things," and in the promise: "Seek ye therefore first the kingdom of God and his justice, and all these things shall be added unto you." We believe, therefore, that in our Heavenly Father we have One Who is ready to harken unto our voice, to listen to our pleadings, to our tales of affliction, to our cries of distress and need.

We know furthermore, principally from the testimony of our own conscience, that we are possessed of freedom of will; that for the greater reward and the more resplendent beauty of our service God has determined that it should be freely given; we recognize at once the wonderful dignity and the terrible responsibility of this possession. It is not given to any other earthly creature to serve God as man can serve Him; nor is

it given to any other to lose God as man can lose Him. At stake therefore is the eternal possession or the eternal loss of God.

We are convinced also that, since man's fall, the will of man is drawn from God by temptation and by the false attractiveness of sin, that it is allured from that service which the mind and the heart proclaim to be the one fitting object of its acts. Where then is our strength? Our strength is in the God that loves us. Our strength is in the gifts of strength that He can bestow. Our strength is in our weakness; our recognition of our dependence upon God. Our strength is in prayer. For prayer implies and embraces the deepest and most fundamental acts of religion: faith and hope and love, and all these three bespeak our acknowledgment of God's supremacy. To worship God, to thank God, to beg God's forgiveness, to petition God's favors, these are acts of prayer; acts by which the soul of man mounts above the plains of earth to higher realms where it can come close to God its Maker. Prayer is a manifestation of man's littleness and man's dignity. If he be the only creature that needs to pray, it must be remembered that he is the only one that is privileged to pray. It is indeed the consciousness of his own weakness but it is at the same time the consciousness of his immortality that forces him to pray. To bow the head and to bend the knee and, what these outward acts indicate, to submit the heart and will are evidences of lowliness, but of a lowliness that carries with it an immeasurable blessing in that the soul, by its submission, is enabled to rise upon the wings of faith from its earthly abode to regions where it can with child-like affection speak to God.

DUTY OF PRAYER

Intimately connected with religion, even in its primary dictates, is the duty of prayer. Our Blessed Saviour insisted upon this duty in word and example throughout His life. "Lord teach us how to pray," was the request of His apostles, and He answered the request by giving the most beautiful prayer that was ever uttered. No prayer will go unheeded,

for He has given us the word: "And I say to you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For every one that asketh, receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened" (Luke xi. 9, 10). His whole life, as if teaching us to pray always, was a life of prayer. When trouble and affliction sought Him out, He went into the mountain to pray; when men admired His wonderful works and in their enthusiasm would make Him their king, He escaped from the multitude and went apart into the wilderness to pray; when trial was upon Him and especially His last great Agony, He sought consolation in prayer, while on the cross His last words were words of prayer: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Yes, let men with the world's learning theorize as they may about the uselessness of prayer: let so-called philosophers point out how, in their minds, prayer is against the unchangeable laws of nature, let them in their imaginings attempt to prove how it is impossible for God to heed any petition that His creatures may make, the facts remain untouched, that, from the beginning of the world, prayers have been answered again and again, and that Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, God and man, insisted upon this primary duty of His intelligent creatures. All the dreamings that would discountenance religion, all the high sounding phrases of men that would seek to sap the faith of devoted souls become as mere chaff upon the wind beside the "thanks be to God" rising from out the fervent heart that has spoken to God and has heard the answer. All the theories of a material philosophy fade into insignificance beside the one simple fact of a crucifix erected as a crown to nature's beauty, or within the sacred confines of the House of God, speaking the thankfulness for the prayer that has been heard.

WE MUST PRAY FOR OTHERS

Man is made for prayer, as he is made for God; nor does his duty in this matter end with himself. If we are taught to pray, none the less are we taught to pray for others. "The prayer of

the just man availeth much," says Holy Writ. Our Blessed Lord, with the dread vision of His cruel death immediately before Him, prayed not only for His chosen ones but for all men of all times. In answer to Abraham's prayer God would have spared Sodom: for David's prayer He forgot the sin of Israel; for Moses' prayer He held back His smiting justice from the idolators; for the prayer of St. Paul He saved the shipwrecked; and throughout all the history of man upon earth, there is no fact more palpable, except to the eyes that will not see, than the efficacy of intercessory prayer.

But oh! the prayers, especially the prayers for others that are unanswered! No—do not say unanswered; but that seem to remain unanswered. How often do we pray and pray for some afflicted one, wounded in body or in soul; for some one close unto us by the ties of relationship or love; for some one who has tasted the dregs of iniquity; for some one who has lost the gift of faith,—and across the space between this world and the great unknown there comes no answer. Ah! sometimes we are impatient. We do not ask as we should. We are forgetful of that holy importunity in prayer upon which our Blessed Lord insisted. We fail to knock again and again at the gates of God's loving mercy until our ceaseless cry compels an answer. Sometimes we beg for that which we know not; and were it granted would prove our undoing. God hears the cry but gives a different answer; "And which of you if he ask his father bread, will he give him a stone? or a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? or if he shall ask an egg will he reach him a scorpion?" The unanswered prayer, in the terminology of men, often means the prayer that is answered differently from the way in which we would have it answered, and better because it is answered according to God's good judgment. No prayer rightly offered for another's good will remain unheard. The grace will be forthcoming in God's time; and if then the grace is refused the fault is not His. Especially is this so when we pray for those who never had, or who have lost or grown weak in the faith. It may be with the quickness of the lightning's flash that the message comes and is heeded; it may be in the revelation that some

mighty affliction begets that the light dawns; it may be when this human soul is bowed down in grief that imperiously cries out for God that the answer is granted; it may be when the terrors of the elements proclaim, as the thunders of Sinai, their ruler; or in nature's vast solitudes of forest and mountain and sea, or in the undisturbed silence of a little wayside church when one is forced to kneel and worship that the supernatural power of God acts, and the soul, for which we prayed, subduing its pride, bowing down under a necessity that knows no resistance, yields itself up and asks, as one who was conquered of old: "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?"

THE CHURCH PRAYS FOR ALL

The Kingdom of God upon earth, His Church, like the true mother that she is, is always praying for her children. The words of St. Paul she speaks to us: "We give thanks to God always for you all; making remembrance of you in our prayers without ceasing." Like unto her Divine Master and Founder, her heart yearns for human souls; and is ever soliciting the mercy of heaven. If God hearkens to the prayer that rises from the soul of even one of His children, will He not give even a readier ear to the united anthem of the praise of millions, and the irresistible plea of the countless voices that are represented in the prayer of the Church? In the divine promise: "Whatsoever you shall loose upon earth, shall be loosed also in heaven," did not our Saviour include the power of intercession? If He can not resist the pleading voice of one of His servants, how can He refuse to hear the cry of His Church?

And so she has always prayed for her children. In their name she has spoken their homage and their love, their sorrow and their dependence, their thanksgiving and their petitions. In fact all her services are manifestations of the spirit of prayer that abides in her; and of that solicitude for the individual soul's welfare for eternity. Mayhap, when occasion and circumstance warrant, she prays to God, the Master of all things, for temporal favors, for natural blessings, for these are ever

subordinate to her one aim, her one work, the sanctification of each soul and the securing of its eternal goal and destiny. The remembrance of us that she makes in her prayers is that we may know God and love Him. In the mementoes daily offered for the living and the dead; in the masses of Requiem so frequently sent up for the repose of the departed; in the beautiful service of Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament; in the all-embracing prayers chanted at her altars on Good Friday, in the Feasts of All Souls and of All Saints, we have but a few of the many instances of the intercessory prayer of the Kingdom of Christ on earth that goes up to the throne of the King in heaven.

CONCLUSION

The members of a religious community share in the benefits accruing to the prayers of the whole body: the members in a Sodality or League or any devotional body participate in the prayers of all: in like manner every Catholic is not left to his own individual efforts, but, through his membership in the Church, he obtains entrance into the treasury of which she is the guardian; he becomes the object of her solicitude; he shares in the favors that are granted to her as to the Kingdom of Christ on earth. From this sublime fact and mighty truth, one lesson at least we can derive, that of the union of our prayers with those of the Church that is making remembrance of us in her prayers without ceasing. Whatever the favor we desire, whether for ourselves or for others, whether spiritual or temporal, whether for a stronger faith or a better morality, our request will go before heaven's Throne, strengthened a hundred and a thousand fold, if it be united with the voice of the Church. In that greatest act of religion, entrusted to her care from the beginning, now surrounded by her grand liturgy, guarded by her with a jealousy surpassing that of the King for his throne or the miser for his gold, in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, the legacy of Christ's love to her sanctuaries, the Church has a prayer which must be heard. Does your soul desire to offer the prayer of worship and homage,

and yet, aware of its own unworthiness, hesitate? It should not hesitate, for it can unite, together with the Church, its praise with the praise of Jesus Christ and no canticle of glory can be sweeter than His before the throne of His Father.

Does your soul long to render thanks to the Bestower of all the goods and all the blessings of life and yet, knowing that it is at the best poor and ungrateful, fear to raise its voice? Let it, together with the Church, unite its thanksgiving with the Holy Eucharist, and the song will ascend to heaven mightier than the "Magnificat."

Does your soul, perhaps deep in the mire of sin, despair of God's pardon, or does it fear it can not atone for its offenses? Let it send up its plea in the voice of the Church united with the Divine Victim in the Mass, and the answer will come as surely as it came upon Calvary, "This day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

Does your soul desire God's blessings and favors, and yet, knowing these are not deserved, draw back from making the petition? Let it send up its cry for mercy and for favor through the Church uniting its prayer with Jesus Christ in the Mass, and the answer must come, for the Victim Himself has said: "Whatsoever you ask the Father in my name, that he will give unto you."

This is one of the privileges of membership in the Catholic Church. When, therefore, you kneel in prayer, at home or in church; when you assist at the divine services, especially at the holy Sacrifice of the Mass; when you come before the altar in the joyousness of youth or in the loneliness of old age; when you come with the crown of success upon the brow or with the sting of failure in your breast; when you come in gladness and rejoicing or in tears and sadness; when you come before the toil of the day is begun or after the heat and labor have past; when you come in the calm peace of the spirit or in trial and temptation and trouble; remember that the offering of prayer that you place before your God finds a sympathetic echo and an added force in your Church, that is making remembrance of you in her prayers without ceasing.

On the Prayer of Petition

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRUEHL, D.D.

Ask and you shall receive; that your joy may be full.—John xvi. 24.

OUR LACK OF TRUST IN PRAYER

My friends: We have frequently heard these encouraging words of our Lord. They are plain and unmistakable. Yet we are not thoroughly convinced of the power of prayer. There remains in our hearts a lurking diffidence when we ask for some extraordinary favor, lest we should ask in vain. With our lips we readily admit the omnipotence of prayer; but in our heart of hearts there still stirs a subtle doubt, destroying our trust as the cankerworm destroys the blossom. Hence, we do not pray with that childlike confidence and sweet trust which the Lord expects and which would put all fears at rest and our hearts at ease. How is such halfheartedness, such want of faith, possible in the face of the clear promise of Christ? His words should dispel all doubts and fill our souls with unwavering confidence. They warrant the completest, fullest, most absolute faith in the power of prayer.

There must be something wrong, then, in our notions concerning prayer, which accounts for this lack of faith and which takes the zest and joy out of our prayers and sometimes comes over our soul like a blight, killing all the little buds of hope that timidly put forth their tender leaves. We must try to understand prayer rightly, for it is such an important factor in our spiritual life and has so much to do with our internal peace and happiness. A right conception of prayer will banish all our faintheartedness and kindle in our hearts a joyous and unshakable assurance.

THE PRAYER OF PETITION A NECESSITY

We are now speaking of the prayer of petition, for it is to this that our Lord makes reference. To ask God for favors

and assistance is as natural to man as it is for the bird to fly and for the fish to swim. Man's powers are limited; in every undertaking he soon comes to a point where his own efforts fail and where success depends on circumstances over which he has no control. Then and there he feels that he must appeal to a higher power. He prays.

The farmer may till the soil and sow the seed; but he cannot make the sun shine at the proper time nor can he make the rain fall when it is needed. A child is at the point of death; the physician can apply all the remedies which science knows, but he cannot make them take effect. Therefore, whilst the doctor is busy with the little patient, you see the tearful mother on her knees, sending urgent prayers to Him, in whose hands is life and death. Prayer is the natural supplement of our weakness. We pray to God, because we are dependent upon Him. We pray to God, because without Him we are helpless. Prayer is as old as mankind. Through all the ages a cry has gone up from this earth to the throne of the Most High.

Especially when our needs press down on us, when some frightful danger threatens us, when some great, overwhelming calamity stares us in the face, a prayer leaps to our lips, spontaneously, irresistibly. Prayer is a profound instinct of nature which even long habits of religious indifference cannot uproot. When a great crisis suddenly bursts upon us, nature asserts itself and breaks down all vain pretense, and our lips will pray almost in spite of ourselves. The following story will illustrate this point: In England lived a miner who made a boast of his infidelity. One day in the mine some coal began to fall, and the terrified man cried out, "Lord, save me." Then a fellow-miner turned to him and said, "Ay, there is nothing like cobs of coal to knock the infidelity out of a man." Men may keep down the instinct of prayer for a time, but there are moments when it will assert itself. In days of national disaster prayer again becomes popular. In the hours of suffering prayer is the best and only comfort. In the face of death, men who have forgotten their prayers, again fall back on this last help. In great distress men either pray or despair.

THE EFFICACY OF OUR PETITIONS DUE TO THE VERY NATURE OF GOD

If it is natural for man to lift imploring hands to God, it is natural for God to listen to his entreaties and to grant his petitions. God does not implant an instinct in a creature for which He does not also provide the proper fulfillment. He has made the eye for the light and the lungs for the air; He prompts man to pray that he might be heard and that help should come to him. The very fact that this impulse to pray exists is proof that God in His turn is willing to heed our humble supplications. When He puts it into the heart of the unfledged bird to cry to its mother, when hungry or frightened, He also puts into the heart of the mother the willingness to respond to this cry; for otherwise the helpless brood would cry in vain and perish. There is a beautiful harmony in God's works. Hence if He makes man pray, it is because His ear is open to the cry for help wrung from an anguished heart and forced from quivering lips.

That much our own reason would tell us. But the verdict of reason is confirmed by God's own testimony. The Bible abounds in passages in which God pledges Himself to answer our prayers. Let us rehearse only a few. Through the mouth of the Psalmist He declares: "Call upon Me in the day of trouble. I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify Me" (Ps. xlix. 15). Again He says, "Cry to Me and I will hear thee; and I will show thee great things and sure things which thou knowest not" (Jer. xxxiii. 3). In the New Testament we have similar assuring utterances. St. Paul exhorts us: "Be nothing solicitous; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God" (Phil. iv. 6). And what could be more confidence-inspiring than the words of to-day's Gospel.

We need not go far to seek the reason for God's willingness to listen to our prayers and to come to our rescue. God is omnipotent and He is good. His power makes Him capable of granting our petitions, His goodness inclines Him to fulfill them. The Lord Himself gives this reason: "For the Father loveth you" (John xvi. 27). Love disposes us to give and help.

And since God loves us, He also will be pleased to assist us and to shower gifts upon us. Only His love is greater than human love, and therefore His willingness to help is greater. Of this Christ assures us in the following words: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father from heaven give the good spirit to them that ask Him?" (Luke ii. 13).

Instances of prayers granted in the Holy Scriptures are as numerous as pebbles in a brook. David rejoices over the fulfillment of his petition: "In my affliction I called upon the Lord; and I cried to my God. And He heard my voice from His holy temple; and my cry before Him came into His ears" (Ps. xvii). Anna prayed and her prayers were heard. Moses interceded in behalf of his people, and he was heard. Solomon asked for wisdom, and his prayer was granted. The faithful asked for the deliverance of St. Peter from captivity, and the doors of his prison opened miraculously. Such examples could easily be multiplied. It will not be difficult for us to detect in our own lives striking and startling interferences of Divine Providence in answer to some earnest prayer. Who could not tell of some danger escaped, of some misfortune averted, of some unexpected success, as the result of fervent and prolonged prayer? Is there any man here that has not some time in his life experienced for himself the power of prayer? Have you not found comfort in your trials, solace in your troubles, strength in your temptations, patience in your sufferings, cheerfulness in your misfortunes through prayer? Have you not often, as you were kneeling and praying ardently, felt a new hope born in your heart and a sweet contentment come over your soul? In many ways God answers our prayers. Well does the poet say:

> More things are wrought by prayer
> Than this world dreams of.—(*Tennyson.*)

Was it not by prayer that the Saints surmounted all difficulties placed in their way? Was it not prayer that enabled them to accomplish the most wonderful things? They built hospitals, asylums, schools, churches, homes and shelters for the

destitute without money. Prayer supplied the funds. Nothing great in this world has been done without prayer. The power of prayer shines forth brilliantly in the history of the world and especially in the history of the Church. Accordingly, our confidence in the efficacy of prayer is well founded and based on reason and on experience.

UNANSWERED PRAYERS NO REASON FOR DISTRUST

Now, here is a fact by which many are, if not sorely perplexed, at least seriously puzzled. It is the fact that many of our prayers are seemingly not answered. It is no uncommon thing to find people sceptical with regard to prayer, because they have failed to get the things for which they have prayed. In the stress of some trial they have faithfully prayed, and the heavens seemed to be of brass and no answer came. This disappointment has shattered their confidence in the power of prayer and impaired their faith in God. Many of us have had the same disconcerting experience, and in many of us it may have produced the same disheartening effect and somehow lessened our trust in prayer.

If rightly understood, this fact, instead of weakening our confidence in prayer, will increase and strengthen it. For it shows that God's power does not grant our prayers until God's wisdom has sanctioned them. Thus, prayers dictated by our folly cannot become our ruin. God stands between our real good and our inordinate desires. If anything is certain it is this that we rarely, if ever, know what is good for us. We are children of a larger growth. And what is more evident than that children frequently desire things which are harmful to them. Only by refusing such silly prayers can the parents save the child from itself. We are no wiser. Hence, if God granted our prayers indiscriminately, He would connive at our folly and conspire with our passing chance desires against our genuine and lasting welfare. If prayer worked automatically, it would be a most dangerous thing and we would have to be afraid of it. It is much better and safer for us, therefore, that God makes the fulfillment of our petitions dependent on His

own wisdom and not on our shortsighted and blind self-love. Even an old pagan philosopher realized that it would be bad for us if God yielded to our whims and fancies. Therefore, he made this cautious prayer: "O God, the things that are helpful grant us whether we ask for them or not; but the things that are evil refuse, even though we importune Thee for them." So when we ask God for anything, let us do so with the tacit understanding that God grant or refuse according to His superior wisdom.

Of St. Ubaldus the following story is told: Three blind beggars one day approached him, beseeching him to restore their sight. Ubaldus fervently prayed to God that their wishes might be fulfilled. Two of them were made whole and their vision restored. The third one he admonished to bear patiently his affliction, for God did not see fit to bestow on them the gift of sight. To comfort him he said: "My friend, the restoration of the use of your eyes would not be for your greater good; without sight you will serve God better and in Heaven you will behold Him in a clearer light than many who enjoy the use of their eyes." It is better that our prayers remain unanswered than that they should prove our undoing or that they interfere with the purposes of God, when in His providence He plans something better for us than we dare to dream of. God denies our petitions because if granted they would bring us real injury or because in His goodness He intends to substitute some higher blessing for them. Thus, when we pray we will not pray stubbornly, but submissively and with resignation, as our Lord has taught us in the garden of Gethsemane.

My friends, no prayer is useless. The time may be delayed, the manner may be unexpected, but the answer is sure to come. No prayer is lost. In God's own time and way it will be wafted back again in clouds of mercy and fall in showers of blessing on you and those for whom you pray. Amen.

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FEAST OF THE ASSUMPTION

SUBJECT

THE SECOND PART OF THE HAIL MARY

TEXT

Mary hath chosen the best part, which shall not be taken away from her.—LUKE x. 42.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The words of our text, which were spoken of Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus, the Church has applied to the most glorious Mother of God. She, above all other creatures, was divinely elected and singularly favored by the Most High, even from the first instant of her conception in her mother's womb; and throughout her mortal years she passed from grace to grace, from merit to merit, ever choosing the best and holiest part, until, ripe for her celestial crown, she was taken from earth to heaven, to assume the place of immortal glory and happiness prepared for her by her Divine Son, far above all angels and saints. There in her blessed state, exalted beyond the stars, and admired and praised by all the heavenly court, this holy Virgin looks down to-day and at all times with love and pity upon her faithful clients and devoted children here on earth, ever mindful of their needs and ever ready to intercede for them with her Son.

In the second part of the *Hail Mary* the Church has given us simple, yet sublime words which at once proclaim the holi-

ness and dignity of our Blessed Mother and express the need we have for her tender care and constant maternal assistance. Let us now briefly reflect on the different parts of this beautiful prayer.

I. **Words of praise:** "Holy Mary, Mother of God." 1. The Blessed Virgin is addressed as "holy," because she was never subject to any sin. From the very beginning of her existence she was endowed with the highest gifts of grace and so co-operated with them during her life as to merit final exaltation above all the angels and saints. "Such was Mary," says St. Ambrose, "that her life is a model for all" (*De Virgin.*, L. 2. c. 2. n. 15). 2. "Mother of God." This title expresses a dignity so lofty that it borders on the divine: "from the fact that she is the Mother of God the Blessed Virgin has a certain infinite dignity, derived from the infinite Good who is God" (*Summa Theol.* I. q. 25, a. 6, ad 4). We sometimes wonder why the Evangelists who have spoken so much about John the Baptist and the Apostles, have given us so little concerning Mary; but the answer is found in this that her perfection was too great to be expressed in many phrases, and is more fitly summed up in these few words: "Mary of whom was born Jesus" (Matt. i. 16) (St. Thomas of Villanova). Bruno of Asti says: "You ask what is the dignity of the Mother of God; ask first, what is the dignity of the Son."

II. **Words of petition:** "Pray for us sinners, now and at the hour of our death, Amen." 1. "Pray for us." The mediatorship of the Blessed Virgin is second only to that of Christ: (a) because after Christ she stands nearest to God on account of her singular dignity and holiness; (b) because by consenting to become the Mother of God she became the spiritual mother of the human race; (c) because we were all committed to her care by our Lord on the cross (John xix. 26, 27). That the intercession of the Blessed Virgin is most powerful we know, (a) from the fact that our Lord's first miracle was worked at her request; (b) from the fact that the Church invokes her as

the "Gate of heaven," the "Help of Christians," the "Comforter of the afflicted," etc.; (c) from the testimonies of the Saints, who declare that it has never been heard that anyone had recourse to her intercession or implored her help in vain. 2. "Sinners." This word is used: (a) to remind us that the intercession of Mary, who was without sin, will make our requests more acceptable before God; (b) to serve as an acknowledgment of our offenses and of our repentance; (c) to inspire our confidence, since Mary is in a special way the advocate and refuge of sinners. "Mary became the Mother of God for sinners," says St. Anselm, "for her Son declared that He came for sinners rather than for the just" (*De excell. virgin., L.* 1. *c.* 1.). Since all are sinners, there is no one who cannot thus appeal to the Mother of mercy. 3. "Now," that is, throughout the whole course of our lives, which are beset with every kind of danger both to soul and body, such as, the allurements and temptations of the world, the assaults of evil spirits, the base inclinations of our corrupt nature, etc. Our present life is like a sea lashed with innumerable tempests, filled with perilous rocks, etc., and Mary is like the star that safely guides us through all dangers. 4. "At the hour of our death." There is no time during our lives that we so much need our Lady's help as when our strength fails and the darkness, temptations, and loneliness of death surround us. Surely she, who sat at the deathbed of the dying St. Joseph and who stood by the cross of her Divine Son as He yielded up His spirit, will be, after Christ Himself, our greatest advocate and solace as we go down into the valley of the shadow of death.

Exhortation. 1. "In dangers, in tribulations, in doubts, think of Mary and invoke Mary" (St. Bernard). 2. In our daily recitation of this second part of the *Hail Mary* let us have the intention of securing through her intercession the gift of final perseverance and of a holy and happy death. 3. In order that we may at all times, and especially at the hour of death, be favored with the blessed intercession of our Lady, let us be

zealous now and throughout our lives to imitate her life and heavenly example.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermon

The Hail Mary

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRUEHL, D.D.

INTRODUCTION

My friends, a striking feature of the Catholic religion is its harmony with human nature and its wonderful accord with all the nobler aspirations of our heart. There is not a lofty and pure sentiment that is not called into play by some practice or doctrine of our Holy Church; there is not a chord in our breast that does not vibrate with sweet music to the touch of our holy faith. And it is for this reason that the Catholic Church has such a firm hold upon its members, since it not only satisfies the cravings of the understanding, but also captivates the hearts and enlists every undefiled sentiment. One of these doctrines and practices appealing to the tender feelings of our soul is the devotion to the blessed Virgin Mary. According to Catholic teaching Mary, the Mother of God, is also our Mother. This position has been given to her by her divine Son. And if our Lord is our brother, and, as St. Paul puts it, "the first born amongst many brethren" (Rom. viii. 29), then truly His Mother must be also our Mother.

Now, there is nothing that has such power and influence over the human heart as the name, the thought and the memory of a mother. A Church that gives us a heavenly Father and a heavenly Mother must, accordingly, become endeared to us. It will not remain a cold and icy thing to our feelings; but it will necessarily grow into our affections and become a thing of the heart, an object of love and enthusiasm. It will

be to us a home. And it is in this light that the Catholic looks upon his Church. Everything in it attracts him; he finds there the images of his heavenly Father and Mother; nay, their living presence. He loves to linger there. There he unburdens his soul. There he is cheered and comforted. There prayer becomes easy. The hours spent in the sweet silence of his heavenly Father's house and his heavenly Mother's home do not seem long; they have wings, and soft and soothing is their step.

The devotion to the Blessed Virgin makes religious exercises dear to us, and the church homelike. It softens the solemnity of ceremonies and mitigates the awe that religion inspires. This is one of the reasons why we add the Hail Mary to the Our Father. The Our Father is a great prayer. But it is so overwhelmingly solemn; it has such a grave accent and proceeds in such majestic pace. Therefore, we mingle with the organlike tones of the Lord's Prayer the lighter keys of the Angelic Salutation.

The prayer, which can most emphatically be called the prayer of the Blessed Virgin, is the Hail Mary. It is an authentic formula, sanctioned by God and the Church and endorsed by all Christian ages and generations. It embodies all the characteristics of the devotion to the Blessed Lady and eminently produces its great and glorious effects. It is a polished mirror, focusing all that is best in the various forms of the devotion to Mary; even as the sparkling glow of the diamond flashes forth all the bright colors and tints which other precious gems only reflect in part. There is no exaggeration in the words of the devout Thomas à Kempis, when he says: "When I recite the Hail Mary, heaven rejoices, the earth marvels, Satan withdraws, hell trembles, all sadness vanishes, joy returns, the heart glows, the soul is filled with holy unction; hope animates my bosom and a wonderful consolation gladdens my whole being." The holy fathers are unanimous in extolling the merits and the power of the Hail Mary. Let us quote one more passage. It reads: "The Hail Mary is small in extent, but great as to the mysteries it expresses; it is easy to pronounce, but mighty in its effects; it is sweeter than honey and more

precious than gold. It should be frequently on our lips and re-echo in our hearts."

The Hail Mary is a great means of salvation. Many a one has it snatched from eternal perdition and led to everlasting glory. Its efficacy is principally manifested in three ways. It obtains for us:

Perseverance in grace,
Strength in temptation, and
Final repentance.

PERSEVERANCE

Perseverance is the crowning grace of a Christian life. "He that shall persevere unto the end, he shall be saved" (Matt. xxiv. 13). We are frail. Each new day brings its temptations and its struggles. Our fervor languishes. We grow weary. Perhaps the next day will witness our sad fall. And the goal is yet afar off. Many have begun under splendid auspices; but they came to a deplorable end. Their strength failed before they had reached the top of the mountain. Some ignominiously perished in the very sight of the gates of heaven. Yea, it is a gift, and a great gift, the grace of perseverance.

We may obtain it by prayer in general; but especially by prayer to the Blessed Virgin. Through the hands of the Blessed Virgin we can receive all graces, consequently the grace of perseverance. The Hail Mary has a direct reference to this grace, as it invokes the assistance of Mary for the hour of death; but a holy death is the essential element of perseverance. Mary possessed in an extraordinary degree the grace of perseverance, since she never lost the initial grace that she received at her immaculate conception. She was faithful to every grace God imparted to her. Thus she can also procure this grace for her followers and children. Saint Bernard declares: "If thou dost enjoy Mary's favor, thou art sure of salvation." And a very happy and comforting assurance it is! No prayer will more readily gain for us the good will of Mary than the Angelic Salutation. Recite this prayer daily; recite it devoutly and the Blessed Mother will guide you

unscathed through the lurking dangers, and she will prepare for you the crown of perseverance. Numbers, legions of blessed souls owe their salvation to the daily recital of the Hail Mary. Devotion to the Blessed Lady is a badge of predestination.

Constant prayer is indispensable to perseverance. But we shall not pray constantly if we do not learn to love prayer. If prayer proves for us an irksome task we will shirk it. There is no easier prayer, none more charming, than the Hail Mary. We will never feel it burdensome to recite a Hail Mary. Through the Hail Mary we shall acquire a taste and love for prayer, and thus make sure of our perseverance. And then it is so easy to pray to Mary. It is like speaking to one's mother. The lips open spontaneously, the tongue is loosed, prayer wells up from the bottom of the heart; the eye is beaming with confidence, love and rapture. If you drop into a church and behold in the hallowed gloom of the subdued light a fervent worshiper, his knees glued to the floor, his eyes fixed on the altar, his lips incessantly murmuring in sacred monotony, you know that the beads of his rosary are slipping through his fingers, and that he is ever repeating with waxing fervor the Hail Mary. A long prayer may fatigue us or weary our attention; it may irritate our mind by overtaxing its capacity. Not so the Hail Mary. You cannot become tired of it. It is short. It cannot pall on you. It is profound and subtle. It cannot vex your understanding. Its expression is simple. No, you will never find the shadow of an excuse for not reciting a Hail Mary. And so you will say your Hail Mary every day until your last hour, because it involves no difficulty, no effort, no supreme exertion; because it requires no time; because it will be in the way of no engagement; because it will become familiar, a habit, an unconscious practice. Thus, you will comply with the injunction of our divine Lord, "Always to pray and not to faint" (Luke xviii. 1). So the Hail Mary guarantees our perseverance because it makes prayer easy and delightful.

But after all Jesus is our Saviour. "For there is no other name under heaven given to men whereby we must be saved" (Acts iv. 12). This is undoubtedly true. Yet it takes nothing

away from the efficacy of the Hail Mary. If we remain united to our Lord we shall live, we shall persevere. But the Hail Mary and the devotion to the Blessed Virgin bring us nearer to Jesus. The name of Jesus is emblazoned in the Hail Mary; it culminates in this saving name. Therefore, the Hail Mary has all the power and the saving qualities of the glorious name of Jesus.

Mary makes Jesus a living reality in our life; she makes Him a strong, clearly defined element in our consciousness and gives Him a prominent place in our affections. For those who do not honor Mary Jesus becomes but too frequently a vague sound and a being of the dim past. He is for them only a shadow. But united to Mary, His Mother, Jesus becomes real, living, breathing for us. For a shadow has no mother. Mary links us to Jesus and makes Him live in us. By means of the Hail Mary the memory of Jesus and of His incarnation is kept alive in our souls; the great mysteries of the redemption are brought before our eyes; we live in Jesus and Jesus lives in us. Do we not say in the Angelic Salutation, "The Lord is with thee?" Well, then, if Mary is with us, Jesus is with us also. And if Jesus is with us we are saved. The Hail Mary, therefore, is a most efficacious means to be intimately united to Jesus and to remain in Him, who is the way, the truth and the life.

STRENGTH

Mary is styled the gate of heaven. And the Angelic Salutation may fitly be called the key to heaven. Let us not tire of this beautiful and powerful prayer which will help us to persevere in grace, to remain united to Jesus and to attain to the glory of eternal life.

The Hail Mary is very helpful in overcoming temptations and sin. Through temptation we all must pass, as the gold passes through the crucible to be freed from dross and base alloy; as the grape passes through the scorching heat of summer to acquire its delicious ripeness. But they are dreadful moments when heaven and hell hang in the scales; for we may

stagger and sink, never to rise again. We need not fear, God has provided powerful help for the fatal hour of temptation.

An impervious shield against the fiery darts of hell is the name of Mary and the Angelic Salutation. The power of Satan is paralyzed when we utter this holy name. St. John Chrysostom assures us, "The holy names of Jesus and Mary have an intrinsic power over the devil and are a terror to hell." And well may we imagine it; is not Mary the woman that has crushed the head of the serpent? The blessed name of Mary spells defeat for Satan and his infernal kingdom. And it was precisely the Angelic Salutation that marked the overthrow of Satan's dominion on earth. The Ave Maria sounds to the ears of the devil as his death knell; it strikes terror to his very heart and thwarts his mischievous designs. As the shadows of night vanish at the approach of the dawn; as wax melts before the fire; so do the powers of darkness disappear and so does their force dwindle at the sound of the Hail Mary. Let us arm ourselves with this impregnable shield against the powers of the deep, "against the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places" (Ephes. vi. 12).

How many have been deterred from a foul and disgraceful deed by the memory of their mother! And will not the thought of our heavenly Mother, of her maidenly purity, make us recoil from everything low and impure and shameful? However strong the temptation may be, if we think of our pure, undefiled heavenly Mother, we will not stoop to gratify our basest passions! Her memory will save us in the hour of darkness from degradation. And nothing will bring the thought of our Blessed Mother so forcibly before your mind as the Hail Mary. Mutter this little prayer and a sweet vision will rise before your eyes; Mary will loom up in all her splendor and celestial purity; her shadow will fall upon you and you will feel her eye pierce your very soul. Every evil thought will shrink back, as vermin creep into the dark crevices, when a ray of the sun strikes their hideous forms. The very atmosphere about you will become purified and hallowed!

And where will a child feel safer than near its mother? We

know the absolute trust which a child places in the power of its mother. Nothing does it fear when the mother is nigh! Aye, but our heavenly Mother is powerful, "terrible as an army set in array" (Cant. vi. 3). She is the tower of David, impregnable against the assaults of the devil. She can put to flight all the infernal hosts! Let us seek her presence when the emissaries of hell assail us! Let us call her to our aid when the armies of darkness close in around us!

Let us fervently recite the Hail Mary in the decisive hour of temptation, and the Blessed Lady will be with us and we shall not succumb to the violent attacks of the wicked spirits. St. John Damascene invokes the Blessed Virgin with the following touching words: "Draw near, dear Mother of my Saviour! Thou art my help, my consolation in life. Be near, and I will not be scorched in the midst of the flames of temptation; be near, and surrounded by the snares of the devil I shall not perish; be near, and the waves and tempests aroused by the enemies of God will not wreck and shatter the bark of my salvation! I fear nothing, if thou art my protection! Thy name is my shield! Thy assistance is my armor! Thy help is my sword! By thy strength I repel the enemy and gain the victory!"

REPENTANCE

If the Hail Mary is made for anybody it certainly is made for the sinner. Of course we mean not the obstinate, hardened sinner who defies God and spurns grace; but the struggling, striving sinner, who falls through weakness and frailty and who groans under the weight of vicious habits, which he has contracted. For him the Hail Mary is a precious boon: the antidote against relapse. Devotion to the Blessed Virgin will set the seal upon his conversion and ensure final repentance. Segneri, a great Italian preacher, tells us a very instructive story about a dissolute youth wishing to forsake his evil ways. Ah, but his passions had grown strong and evil habit held him with firm grip. He became disheartened, despairing of overcoming his inveterate habits. His confessor advised him to

recite three Hail Mary's every morning in honor of the Blessed Virgin. After some time the young man returned full of joy and happiness; for by the power of the Hail Mary he had broken the bonds of his sinful habits. Mary had obtained for him a complete conversion.

I can relate an edifying incident from my own experience. A certain Saturday afternoon one of my penitents made her confession as usual. After she had received absolution she asked me to pray for her. As there was a lull in the confessions just then, I recited a Hail Mary for her. And lo! shortly after she returned, telling me that from shame she had concealed a grievous sin. Well, that Hail Mary had helped her to make good her confession and earned for her the grace of repentance. Whoever knows how strong false shame is will realize that Mary helped that girl to gain a great victory.

No; one cannot remain in habits of sin while daily reciting a Hail Mary. The thought of the purity of the Blessed Virgin will fill his soul with shame, will make him loathe his sinful life; will prick his conscience and incite him to make heroic efforts in order to reform his ways. And the Blessed Virgin will encourage him, succor him and lavish on him the choicest graces, until he has emerged from the depths of his disgrace.

But I go further! I maintain that a person reciting daily a Hail Mary, whatever else his life may be, is not likely to be lost. I do not intend to encourage presumption or to embolden sinners to delay their conversion! That always is terribly dangerous and hazardous! Yet we have instances that men who led a notoriously bad life received the grace of a final and sincere repentance. And in some cases this grace was the reward of a single Hail Mary recited faithfully every day, even in the years of dissipation and debauch! Do not base your hopes of salvation on a similar practice; but do recite daily a Hail Mary. It may prove the anchor of salvation! It may be the saving straw in the rushing maelstrom of perdition! Mary is the refuge of sinners. She will stretch out her hand to rescue her clients when the mouth of hell threatens to engulf them.

CONCLUSION

My friends, great is the power of the Hail Mary. A wonderful prayer it is and easy for everybody. And then it so perfectly tallies with the better instincts of our heart, since it is a prayer to our heavenly Mother; a prayer to the purest, sweetest and most amiable of all mothers. If we are just, friends of God and children of grace, let us recite frequently the Hail Mary, that our heavenly Mother may obtain by her infallible intercession for us the great grace of perseverance. If we are battling against sin and struggling against temptation, let us recite often this beautiful prayer, that Mary may help us to rout the enemies of our salvation, to fight a good fight and to win the crown of justice. But if we have fallen into sin, if we walk on the edge of the precipice, if we are dragged down by the weight of our crimes, ah, let us implore the Blessed Mother to deliver us from this dreadful state and to save our unfortunate soul. And if we feel the grip of hell tightening on us, and our soul sinking into darkness, let us cry out with undaunted confidence: Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners. Amen!

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Catholic Encyc., Vol. VII, p. 110; St. Thomas, *Espositio in salutationem angelicam;* Tanquerey, *De Verbo Incarnato,* # # 1256 ff.; Hurter, *Theol. Dog.,* Vol. II # 669; Pohle-Preuss, *Mariology,* pp. 121 ff.; Jarrett, in *Meditations for Layfolk,* pp. 44 ff.

TWELFTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: THE LOVE OF OUR NEIGHBOR AND OF OURSELVES

TEXT

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind: and thy neighbor as thyself.—LUKE x. 27.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The seventy-two disciples had just returned from their mission, and were exulting over the triumphs of their preaching. They had power over serpents and scorpions, they could handle hurtful things without injury, and the demons were subject to them. But Jesus bade them rejoice not in these things, but only in the glorious thought that their names were written in the book of life. Hearing our Lord speak of eternal life a certain lawyer who was present, being deeply interested, asked Him what he must do to possess that heavenly state. Jesus asked him what was written in the Law, and the lawyer replied by repeating the Commandment to love God and one's neighbor. The Saviour approved the man's answer; and to enlighten him regarding the precept of loving his neighbor, to show him in a vivid manner who his neighbor was, He related the beautiful parable we have just read.

I. **The love we owe our neighbors.** 1. The precept to love our neighbor is important, (a) because, as our Lord says in to-day's Gospel, we cannot be saved without observing it; (b) because our Lord makes the observance of this Commandment the sign of His true disciples (John xiii. 35). 2. The love of our neighbor should be, (a) *universal,* extending even to enemies, as this day's parable shows; (b) *supernatural, i.e.,* not based

merely on human qualities naturally agreeable to us, but on the fact that it is pleasing to God and has been commanded by God; (c) *internal, i.e.,* we must sincerely cherish good will towards our neighbor, rejoicing in his prosperity and grieving in his trials; (d) *active, i.e.,* we should assist our neighbor, as far as we can, by words and actions in his needs. The good Samaritan of to-day's Gospel is an example of this last quality. 3. The chief means of exercising charity toward our neighbor are the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. (For corporal works of mercy, see Eighth Sunday after Pentecost in this Series.) 4. Even more important than the corporal, are the spiritual works of mercy, namely, to convert the sinner, to instruct the ignorant, to counsel the doubtful, to comfort the sorrowful, to bear wrongs patiently, to forgive all injuries, and to pray for the living and the dead.

II. **The love we owe ourselves.** 1. When God commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves, He meant that we should love him in the same manner and for the same motive as ourselves, *i.e.,* sincerely, actively, and supernaturally. 2. This precept does not require that we love our neighbor as much as we love ourselves; for while we should prefer our neighbor's spiritual to our own temporal welfare, when all things are equal, our own good has a greater claim on us than that of our neighbor. 3. Love of self is not to be confounded with selfishness or egotism; these latter mean the love of ourselves to the exclusion of love of God and our neighbor. 4. Proper love of self is not an optional matter, but a strict obligation, implied in the words of our text, and illustrated in the parables of the Talents (Matt. xxv.), the Vineyard (Matt. xx.), and the Unjust Steward (Luke xvi.). 5. This precept requires, (a) that we take more care of our souls than our bodies (Matt. xvi. 26), and that we do not omit anything in our power to increase in holiness; (b) that we cultivate our mental and moral powers as far as our state of life demands; (c) that we take proper care of our health and physical well being by means of sufficient food, clothing, exercise, labor, recreation, etc.

Lessons. 1. Our Lord gives us two rules by which to regulate

the love of our neighbor: (a) that we love our neighbor as He has loved us (John xiii. 34); (b) that we do to our neighbor as we would have our neighbor do to us (Matt. vii. 12). 2. In loving ourselves we should strive to avoid that unregulated self-love which is the root of all sin; we should bear in mind the words of our Lord: "He that loveth his life shall lose it, and he that hateth his life in this world, keepeth it unto life eternal" (John xii. 25).

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See Sunday after Epiphany and Quinquagesima Sunday)

Sermons

The Importance of Salvation

BY THE REV. P. A. SHEEHAN

OUR LIFE ON EARTH A PREPARATION FOR ETERNITY

If we could go outside ourselves for an instant, my brethren, and take a survey of this world from eternity, we should behold a very painful sight. It would be the sight of men, coming into this world, warned that this world is not their home, that the life which they are living is only a probation, yet, despising these warnings, grasping at shadows, sinking back into the earth, and waking up in eternity to find that their real life, a life that is to last forever, is only then commencing. Our life here upon earth is nothing more than a dream—a dream of imaginary horrors, imaginary cares, imaginary troubles, and imaginary pleasures—there is only one thing real about it and that is its responsibility. There would be something amusing in the sight of men coming into this world, looking around them bewildered for a moment, and then wasting their energies in pursuing shadows, if there were not attached to every instant of their time, and to every thought, word, and action of their lives a dreadful responsibility. That responsibility makes the folly of man inexpressibly tragic and painful. If there were

no eternity, the weaknesses and follies of men would be unimportant, but as there *is* an eternity, and as every word, action and thought of our lives casts a weight into the scales of God's justice, causing them to bend down towards hell, or fly up towards heaven, our follies are of the utmost importance. Often, when in our blind madness we are hurrying on to destruction, our guardian angel would give worlds to give us one glimpse of Eternity—the eternity of happiness which we are bent upon losing, and the eternity of misery, for which we labor.

Now, my brethren, bring home to yourselves this fact, and if you examine it, you will see how awe-inspiring it is, that once we have commenced to exist we shall never cease to be. There was a time when we were not; there never will be a time when we shall not be. We are immortal. So long as God will live, so long shall we be. He has given us life; it was His own choice. He need not have created us at all; but having created us, we must last forever, because that is the immutable decree of God. He cannot change, and His words do not pass.

It is true we shall die, but death is only a change, it is not the end of existence. It is a change from dreaming to waking, from blindness to sight, from darkness to light. It simply means that our higher nature shall be freed from the thraldom of union with gross, earthly material; and live that life of pure spiritual liberty for which we yearn, and which is our destiny. Death can separate body from soul, and thus separated our bodies will decay; but death has no power over the soul itself. We ourselves have the power (but it is a great power) of determining, not whether we shall or shall not live, but whether we shall be blessed for eternity with the unspeakable blessedness of heaven, or cursed forever in the unimaginable misery of hell.

It is in eternity then that our real lives shall be spent. This world has no lasting interest for us. We are only pilgrims, strangers staying here for a night—the broad day of our real existence is to be spent in Eternity. Shall we then compare this life to Eternity? No, we cannot. What is the length of the largest life compared with the length of eternity? An

instant, a second, that flies by and is forgotten. What are the pains or pleasures of this life compared with the pains or pleasures of eternity? So utterly insignificant that they will not bear comparison. There is no sorrow in this world so great that the mind may not rise superior to it. And however bitter yesterday, its pains are forgotten to-day. But the pains of hell are so overwhelming, that it is only the power of God that can support the victims of His anger, and the pains of hell are never ending. They who have once become the victims of God's justice shall never know His mercy.

In this world, common sense and a little reflection show us the vanity of all earthly things. It is not needful for us to place ourselves in spirit upon our death-beds, to understand the emptiness of worldly vanities. The inborn majesty of our souls forever asserts itself, and we really despise the petty cares, and the petty enjoyments of this life. It is a libel, it is a slander to say that our immortal souls, created and sanctified by God, can be content with the wretched business, and still more wretched pleasures of this world. It is only our lower natures that can be affected by either.

IMPORTANCE OF ETERNITY

Eternity, therefore, and the things of eternity, alone can interest us. But what is there in eternity, that makes the very thought of it dreadful? This, that God has given us for eternity only two alternatives; to be unspeakably happy, with Himself in Heaven, or to live forever crushed beneath the weight of His maledictions in hell. To know, and to enjoy for eternity, happiness, of which the human soul has never yet had the faintest idea, or to suffer forever under an accumulation of miseries, to which the greatest of human sorrows can bear no comparison. To live, the child of God, clasped in the embrace of his love forever, or to live, the enemy of God, withering under His curse forever. To enjoy forever the privileges of the beloved disciple, to lean on the breast of the Master forever, looking up into His face, and lost in the happiness of possessing Him, or to live in the darkness, like that lost disciple, out-

cast, despised, scorned by everything that is good and noble, a stranger to the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

To live in constant communion with the brightest, purest, holiest beings that God's Omnipotence could create—or to be forced to have forever as friends the foulest things into which sin can transform the soul of man. To enjoy the company of the blessed forever, or to be compelled to herd with the reprobate forever. To be moved forever by a sweet necessity of praising God—or to be forced, through sheer malice, to curse and blaspheme God, and fling all foulness at the face of heaven. To receive the sweet congratulations of God's angels, and to vie with them in a holy rivalry of serving God forever, or to receive the welcome of devils in hell, and to be applauded by them, when, progressing in iniquity, we shall come at length to be ingenious in framing blasphemies against God, and shall learn to strike the Sacred Heart of Jesus most surely by cursing His love and His redemption. To be welcomed by Mary to heaven, and for all eternity to be a constant proclamation of her boundless love, or to be cast off by her as unworthy of her maternal care and affection. And no rescue, no redemption, as long as God shall be God. And even now, the eye of God beholds such of us here present as are saints and such of us as are reprobates. He sees this moment, what each of us will be for eternity. He sees in eternity what each of us will have done for himself. He knows well, whether I shall be His child forever, or whether I shall be counted among His enemies forever. His eyes this moment are resting either upon the throne His love has prepared for me in heaven, or upon the fiery bed His anger has prepared for me in hell. Already I am judged, that is, God sees, how I shall judge myself; for it is not God that judges us but we judge ourselves. He knows now, whether I am in sin or whether I am in His grace. If I be in sin, He alone knows whether I shall continue so and die impenitent. If I be in His grace, He sees whether I shall persevere or not to the end. Every struggle between nature and grace is known to Him. Which of the two will conquer, I do not know. God knows. He sees my death-bed, my soul brought into His sight, stained with sins, or purified by His

grace. Shall I see my God, with anger on His countenance, and feel His hands flinging me from Him, or will He look upon me with looks of love and compassion, and stretch forth His hands to clasp me? I do not know; He knows well. Will the first words from His lips be an invitation to heaven that will make me kiss His feet in gratitude, and plunge into the flames of Purgatory with joy, and wrap them around me, in speechless gladness; or, will all the promises of my life be blasted by His curse, and I, myself consigned to the care of devils, a howling, shrieking, despairing reprobate? I do not know, God knows. It is horrible to think that I shall be lost. And yet, what security have I, that I shall be saved? Heaven, or hell, which shall it be? That is the alternative. I do not half understand the meaning of these words. If I did understand them, I should become insane through terror. But even with the little understanding that I have, what words can express my folly, if instead of addressing myself to the task of saving my soul, I waste my time in trifling with the things of this world!

RESPONSIBILITY OF LIFE

Oh, my dearly beloved, ours is a fearful responsibility! Ours is a terrible trial! To be gifted with immortal souls, and to be obliged to shape the destiny of these souls. To be gifted with souls, that are capable of infinite joy, or infinite sorrow, and to know that they will be matched with the infinite happiness of heaven, or the infinite misery of hell, and to feel that it is ourselves who have to determine our own fate, that is a terrible charge—a responsibility that is almost too much for human strength. It ought to be laid upon the shoulders of angels.

If heaven were only a little less beautiful, and hell only a little less horrible; if there were gradations of happiness and wretchedness, and one might be moderately happy, or only partially wretched; and heaven not all joy, and hell not all sorrow; then indeed, it would be easy to view our probation cheerfully, and fold our arms in the assurance, that, come what may, we shall only be comfortably miserable.

But we have but one choice to make. We have to select heaven or hell. Between these two awful eternities the Christian is placed. The question is, Shall we possess God, or shall we not possess Him? Shall we be inexpressibly happy in having all the desires of our souls filled with the possession of God, or shall we be delivered over to the eternal misery of being devoured with cravings after a happiness to which we shall never attain?

That is the question each individual soul has to solve for itself. It affects no one else, not even God. I do not mean to say that God is not interested about us. I could not say it as long as a crucifix meets my eyes, and the history of the Passion of my Blessed Lord and Saviour remains on record. Nay, I know I am only stating the truth, when I say that God regards our struggles on earth with such great interest and anxiety, that the work of His Universe would be neglected, if He were not omnipresent and all powerful. But if I be lost, it will not send one pang through the Heart of Jesus Christ; if I be saved it will be no addition to His glory.

And the same way, our beatified brethren, near and dear relations, are forever looking upon us from the stillness of eternity, looking upon us with ever-anxious eyes, and hopes that sink and rise, as we are defeated or conquer in our dreadful struggle. That interest in us they may maintain until our sentence falls from the lips of the sovereign Judge; but, if that sentence consigns us to eternal flames, they will go back to heaven, and only think of us, as exemplifying God's justice in our damnation. It is marvelous, how little we are affected by the misfortune of others. We cling closely to our own individuality. If a soul from hell were to appear amongst us this moment, surrounded with all its attendant horrors, we should be frightened, dismayed, terrified; but with a host of other feelings we would not have room for one feeling of pity. Our thoughts would fly at once from the sight of that lost soul into our inner hearts, we would take the lesson from that lost soul, but we would not pay it back one feeling of compassion. This is the instinct of our nature, it is the unconscious fulfillment of the duty we owe ourselves. My soul does not go outside my-

self. However dear a friend be to me, he is not myself. His soul is not my soul, and I cannot divide the responsibility of my soul with him. This is the principle even of men of the world in the business of the world. There are few in the world to-day so generous, that they will halve their fortunes with friends; nay, it is often difficult to get a friend to put himself to the slightest inconvenience on our behalf. And yet, how many are there, who, to retain the friendship of a friend, or to win one smile, or to catch one glance from the world, are daily purchasing shares in hell and sacrificing the eternal happiness of heaven. To oblige your friend, you hesitate about putting your name to a promissory note, but you do not hesitate for a moment to blot your name from the "Book of Eternal Life," and to write it down in the devil's album.

CONCLUSION

What I have been saying, my brethren, comes to this, that the salvation of our souls is the one, all-important concern of our lives; and that it is our individual concern. It is the one consideration before which all other considerations must yield. It is the one work to which we must exclusively address ourselves. Every other engagement, however seemingly important, is secondary, and subservient to this one duty of saving our souls.

Every ambition and aspiration, however exalted, must be set aside before this primary ambition of gaining heaven, and escaping hell. Every feeling of our souls must be smothered, if it interfere with our salvation. Every craving for happiness, for fame, for wealth must be stifled, that our one desire of eternal happiness might be satisfied. Whatever comes between my soul and God must be remorselessly set aside. Is it the world and the opinion of the world? Sacrifice it. Is it the friend to whom both honor and affection bind me? Sacrifice that friend. Is it my wealth, my position, my character? Sacrifice them. Is it my rebellious passions, the promptings of my corrupt inclinations? Sacrifice them.

Put yourselves through an ordeal of fire to destroy them.

Is it my life? Sacrifice that life, that you may gain eternal life, and escape eternal death. "Burn, cut, destroy, O Lord, in this life, but, oh, save me in Eternity."

These are rather large demands upon human nature. But remember what I said before, that even a little philosophy will carry us over all the petty vexations of this life: it is hell and hell alone that tries our exquisite capabilities for suffering. Prayer is laborious. What is the labor of prayer compared to the labor of blaspheming God forever? It is difficult to break with that companion who is leading us to hell. Do you think then that you can relish that companionship in hell? It is difficult to crucify my flesh? But do you think you can dwell with devouring flames? Hell is a fact. Heaven is a fact. Ah! beloved, if God would only open our ears we might hear the harmony that, from choirs of angelic voices, is pealing round and round the throne of God. And to gain heaven by a life-long martyrdom would be to purchase it at an easy price.

Address yourselves, therefore, to the work you have in hand. You cannot rid yourselves of the responsibility. And, knowing what heaven is, be misers in hoarding up the graces of God that can alone bring you to heaven; and, knowing what hell is, I would have you terrified about committing sin, for sin is a long step on the road to hell. Remember, as your prayer-book says, that no security can be too great, where eternity is at stake!

The Spiritual Works of Mercy—Teaching the Catechism

BY THE REV. J. A. M. GILLIS, A.M.

Blessed are the merciful; for they shall obtain mercy.—Matt. v. 7.

EXCELLENCY OF MERCY

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Charity beautifies the soul and elevates her to the throne of God. It is the blessed union of the soul with her Creator—her highest beatitude. In this relation it is the

most excellent virtue in the creature. But mercy is the characteristic virtue of God. In this virtue He takes special complacency. It is the one in which His omnipotence is most beautifully manifested. Hence, in the words of the Psalmist, He delights in showing His mercy over all His admirable works. "The Lord is sweet to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works" (Ps. cxliv. 9).

Indeed, the Psalmist seems to find his theme in eulogizing the multitude of the mercies of the Lord. No phraseology at his control seems to be adequate to extol this attribute of God, which soars higher than the lofty vault of heaven and endures through the vista of eternity. Inasmuch, then, as the perfection of man consists in becoming like his Creator, to whose divine image he is made, the exercise of mercy toward his fellow creatures is a most noble act of virtue. Hence the Saviour would have all be merciful men, as our heavenly Father is merciful (Luke vi. 36). Beautifully does the immortal poet bring out this truth when he says:

> The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath: it is twice blessed—
> It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:
> 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes
> The throned monarch better than his crown.'

A glorious scene is pictured by the evangelist of what shall come to pass on the last day, when the merciful acts of man shall receive their reward at the hand of the eternal Judge. When all the nations from the four winds of heaven shall be in solemn waiting in the valley of judgment, the Saviour, clothed in the majesty of His power, shall come in the clouds of heaven with the countless legions of angels in His blessed train. He shall call together His elect from all nations, and tribes and tongues, and shall place them at His right hand, the post of honor, highly befitting a chosen generation and a royal priesthood, destined to share with Christ His kingly throne (1 Pet. ii. 9; Apoc. iii. 21). and in words of ineffable love He will address them the blessed sentence which will confirm them forever in bliss: "Come ye, blessed of my father, possess you the king-

dom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

THE SPIRITUAL WORKS OF MERCY

And this is the reward of merciful deeds. For the Saviour will say to them: "I was hungry and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me." And He will remind them that as long as they did those merciful acts toward one of His least brethren on earth they exercised their mercy toward Him (Matt. xxv. 35–40). The merciful deeds here referred to are corporal works of mercy; but these are not the only works by which this heavenly virtue is manifested. There are also the spiritual works of mercy—seven in number. And if these corporal works are so efficacious to win the eternal friendship of God, must we not hope to receive still greater marks of His favor, and a still richer reward, by exercising those merciful means by which our fellow-being is assisted in obtaining that which is infinitely more valuable than earthly goods—the salvation of his immortal soul. As the soul is more precious than the body, as heaven is high above earth, as eternal happiness transcends all gifts of time, so the spiritual works of mercy are higher and nobler than all other merciful deeds. In them we co-operate with God in His eternal and merciful plan for the salvation of souls.

In seven different ways may we assist our fellow-being to attain eternal happiness—the blessed end of his creation. Thus, the spiritual works of mercy are ordinarily seven in number, namely, to instruct the ignorant; to counsel the doubtful; to admonish sinners; to bear wrongs patiently; to forgive offenses willingly; to comfort the afflicted; to pray for the living and the dead.

To instruct the ignorant is a work which is specially meritorious. Man, made in the image of his Creator, naturally thirsts after knowledge. To assist him in that noble calling is to raise him up above brute force and to conduct him to his

ultimate end by making him conformable to the divine type after which he was fashioned.

To counsel the doubtful, to give good advice is a spiritual work of mercy which is often fruitful of much good. It is the outcome of wisdom—a special gift of the Holy Ghost. God was pleased when Solomon made a choice of wisdom of all the excellent gifts which were at his command. And the Lord said to Solomon: "Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life nor riches, nor the lives of thy enemies, but has asked for thyself wisdom to discern judgment, behold I have done for thee according to thy words, and have given thee a wise and understanding heart, insomuch that there had been no one like unto thee, before thee, nor shall arise after thee. Yea, and the things also which thou didst not ask I have given thee" (3 Kings iii. 11-13). Joseph gave good advice to Pharao when, through the knowledge with which God had blessed him, he unfolded to him the mystery of his dreams, and brought to his notice the wisdom of laying by one-fifth of all the fruits of his kingdom during the seven years of plenty, in order to have sufficient provision made for the seven years of famine which were to follow, and which were to consume all the land. (Gen. xli).

When we admonish the sinner we are acting the part of one who, through his timely interference, would prevent a brother from falling over the brink of a yawning precipice. Superiors are bound in justice to correct those under their charge. To them God speaks by the mouth of the prophet Ezechiel: "If when I say to the wicked: Thou shalt surely die, thou declare not to him, nor speak to him that he may be converted from his evil ways and live, the same wicked man shall surely die, but I will require his blood at thy hand" (Ezech. iii. 18).

Those who are not superiors are not bound by any obligation in justice to correct evildoers. But the divine law of charity obliges all to admonish an erring brother when it can be done without prejudice to oneself and with profit to the erring one.

Our blessed Lord gives a beautiful rule to go by when our fellowman stands in need of correction: "If thy brother shall

offend against thee go and rebuke him between thee and him alone. If he shall hear thee thou shalt gain thy brother. And if he will not hear thee take with thee one or two more: that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may stand. And if he will not hear then, tell the Church" (Matt. xviii. 15-17). And he assures us that this is a work of mercy most acceptable to Almighty God—the one in which He himself takes special complacency. Indeed, He tells us that at the happy tidings of the conversion of a sinner the whole court of heaven rejoices with a jubilee of exultation (Luke xv. 10). The holy apostle St. James brings the same truth home to us when he says: "He who causeth a sinner to be converted from the error of his ways shall save his soul from death and shall cover a multitude of sins" (James v. 20).

To bear wrongs patiently and to forgive offences willingly are acts of mercy sanctified by the divine meekness of the Saviour, "who when he was reviled did not revile: when he suffered, he threatened not; but delivered himself to him that judged him unjustly" (1 Pet. ii. 23). In fact, this beautiful virtue was so marked in His every act that it would seem that His whole life was set before us as one continued act of meekness for our example. It is this heavenly virtue, so congenial to His divine heart, which He himself particularizes when He calls upon all to learn by His example: "Learn of me because I am meek and humble of heart" (Matt. xi. 29). The glorious proto-martyr St. Stephen gave a shining example of this beautiful virtue when his enemies were stoning him to death. The last words on his dying lips were a prayer for his executioners: "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts vii. 5-9). And he saw his reward even when his appeal for his murderers was still ascending to the throne of God. The bright portals of bliss were opened to receive his blessed soul, and he saw Jesus Christ, not sitting, but standing to receive him, on the right hand of the glory of God.

Joseph's conduct toward his hardhearted brothers, who sold him in the land of Egypt, is another example of the divine virtue of meekness. When he was high and mighty in the kingdom of Pharao, and they were supplicants at his feet, he did not

avenge their former cruelty, but freely forgiving them received them with the tender affection of a brother, loaded them with the choicest gifts.

Showing sympathy toward an afflicted fellow-being and condoling with him in his sorrows is another virtue singularly mirrored in the life of the Saviour. His divine heart went out to every affliction of suffering humanity. There was no human sorrow but had an echo in His compassionate heart. The grave of Lazarus witnessed His tears; the home of Martha and Mary His condolence and consolation; the house of the widow of Naim that comfort which dispelled the gloom of sadness and the relief which chased away the shadow of death. In the hour of deepest mourning He visited the house of Jairus and restored to him the joy of his old age which death had already claimed a victim for the tomb. To the valley of sorrow at the pool of Bethsaida He brought a sunshine of gladness by His tender compassion for the most neglected in human affliction. In a word, the boundless compassion of His Sacred Heart, like a vast and limitless ocean, poured itself out to soothe human troubles. There is no virtue which finds a deeper response in our nature than this godly virtue; the sufferings of an afflicted fellow-being never fail to awaken sympathy in the human heart.

"One touch of nature makes all the world akin." But it is not the sympathy that we feel, but the comfort that we bring to our suffering brother that is meritorious before God, and receives its eternal reward as an act of mercy.

Prayer for the living and the dead is the special office of the saints. They continually make their appeal in our behalf before the throne of God. "And when he had opened the book, the four living creatures and the four and twenty ancients fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps and golden vials full of odors which are the prayers of the saints" (Apoc. v. 8). Again, "And another angel came and stood before the altar, having a golden censor; and there was given him much incense that he should offer the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which is before the throne of God" (Apoc. viii. 3).

St. Paul assures us that our prayers for all men, particularly for kings and rulers, and all those who have authority over us, is most acceptable to God (1 Tim. ii. 1-3). We are told in the book of Machabees how the valiant and holy man of that name had sacrifices offered for the sins of the dead; and the inspired writer adds "that it is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead that they may be loosed from their sins" (2 Mach. xii. 43-46).

The holy man Abraham most perseveringly prayed for the people of Sodom that the avenging hand of God might be withdrawn and the impending doom of the sinful city averted (Gen. xviii. 23-32). Moses, the intrepid leader of Israel, interceded with God for His people when their sins cried to heaven and the divine anger was kindled against them (Exod. xxxii. 12, 13). The whole Church prayed without ceasing for the deliverance of the Prince of the Apostles when the wicked Herod laid sacrilegious hands on him and cast him into prison (Acts xii. 5).

Christ, at the sorrowful moment of parting on the eve of His Last Supper, prayed for His disciples and for the whole Church; and His appeal in their behalf to His heavenly Father is one of the most beautiful and touching discourses on the sacred pages. Let us always exercise this act of mercy toward all, and besides bringing upon others the blessings of heaven, we ourselves shall share with them the blessed gifts that we invoke from the throne of God.

CONCLUSION

In concluding this discourse on the spiritual works of mercy I wish to particularize that one in which in a special manner we co-operate with God in the salvation of souls—the one by which we raise the creature up to God by bringing God home to the creature. It is the teaching of religious doctrine—the Catechism. A knowledge of the principal mysteries of religion is absolutely necessary to all. Faith is the gateway to eternal life. The patriarch Jacob saw in a mysterious vision a ladder whose foot was planted on earth and whose

top rested on the portals of heaven. On it the angels found a passageway extending from time to eternity. Even such a passageway is faith, which, as St. Paul says, comes from hearing the word of God here below, and which carries the soul high above the mists of mortal gaze and mortal understanding, and opens before her the veil of eternity. "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. x. 17). The mysteries of religion must be taught. Hence the necessity of religious instruction. It is, in the first place, a necessity of means, for faith which comes by hearing is the only means of knowing God and His holy law; and, therefore, without it the gateway of heaven is closed (Heb. xi. 6). Religious instruction is also a necessity of precept.

On the beautiful day that the Saviour was taken away from mortal gaze in the clouds of Olivet, was not His last loving command, His parting address to teach all nations the mysteries of religion: "Going therefore teach ye all nations" (Matt. xxviii. 19). And this parting injunction of the Saviour was not a new command. At this last solemn meeting of the Apostles He only repeated what He already commanded when He first called them together around Him, when He convened them to the first synod over which He presided. From that first apostolic convocation He sent them to preach the kingdom of God (Luke ix. 1, 2). And the charge which He assigned to the Apostles on that eventful day, and repeated on the mountain of Ascension, He assigns to His Church, teaching on earth to the end of ages (Matt. xxviii. 20).

How beautifully expressed in the ecclesiastical institutions of Benedict XIV is the sacred duty of imparting the knowledge of God! In his ordinance we read: "We command all those to whom has been committed the care of souls that on all Sundays and other days of obligation they teach the Christian doctrine to the children under their charge." Again we find in the magnificent pastoral letter of this holy pontiff a beautiful exhortation to pastors to remind parents and guardians of children of their obligation, under pain of eternal condemnation, to see that their children and wards are well grounded in their knowledge of the Christian doctrine. The great pon-

tiff would remind such parents of the beautiful example they would give by leading their children by the hand to Sunday Catechism, and remaining with them to listen to the sacred teaching; and thus to drink in, in their declining years, the full understanding of many things which did not dawn on them in their youth; or to revive the memory of what the lapse of years tended to make them forgetful of. Let all who co-operate with God in the sacred work of imparting His knowledge to men rejoice in the promise of the eternal reward spoken of by the prophet Daniel: "They that instruct many to justice shall shine as stars for all eternity" (Dan. xii. 3).

The Corporal Works of Mercy

BY THE REV. CHARLES P. BRUEHL, D.D.

Blessed is the man that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor; in the day of evil the Lord will deliver him.—Ps. xl. 1.

INTRODUCTION

My friends, there is much misery in this world of God. If the aggregate of human distress of only one fairly large city were flashed on our sight, it would be an overwhelming, heart-sickening vision. There is old age fretting under its weary load of lonesome days and sleepless nights; there is pinching want preying on children and women as a hungry wolf; there is a hopeless poverty clouding the brains of men and driving them to despair and crime; there is a sordid indigence degrading man and blotting out his finer and nobler qualities, leaving nothing in him but the wild raging desire for food and drink. And then the hospital with its groaning sick and friendless dying; the ambulance hurrying through our busy streets with its horrible freight of mangled or infected humanity; the orphan asylum with its little ones that never knew the love of a father and never felt the warm kiss of a mother; the slums with the houseless, the unsheltered, the down trodden, the submerged; the prison looming dark and gloomy with its barred cells and bolted doors; the nameless graves in some

neglected corner of the cemetery—these are the hideous spots on the fair brow of a boasting city. And this may be within the sweep of our eye; yea, perhaps, next door to our own comfortable home. The shoulders of our fellowmen are heavily laden and their footsteps often falter under the pressing weight of affliction; and imploringly they cast their eyes around for some one to lighten their burden. The tottering and fallen stretch out their hands for some one to uplift them. The heart-broken, the stricken ones, the tearful, the suffering, the needy sigh for one to relieve their distress, to dry their tears and to brighten their days.

Will we remain indifferent, insensible to the woes and hardships of our fellowmen? Will we harden our hearts against their pitiful entreaties?

"Blessed is the man, that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor." Blessed he that understandeth the designs of God with regard to the suffering, the wretched and the helpless. Blessed he that does not shut his ears against the humble supplications of the miserable; whose hand is extended to help and give and uplift. For he does the work of God, the work of mercy; he is heaven's own minister, sent on glorious errands of charity.

Such was the plan of God; that mercy should relieve misery, that the prosperous should assist the poor, that the strong should support the weak, that the affluent should share his wealth with the needy, that man should help his fellowmen. God sends His messengers to the abodes of poverty, to the bedside of the suffering, to the dismal cells of the condemned. But these ministers of God, bringing relief and help and gladness, are not the winged angels of heaven, but merciful men and women with compassionate hearts and generous souls, possessing the goods of the earth and strong in health and liberty. And you, my dear friends, you also are to be ministers of mercy, angels of compassion, helpmates of God in assisting the poor and diseased. God has not forsaken the destitute; He will help them by the agency of their fellowmen. And every individual must co-operate in this great work of relief. God has imposed on every one a task of mercy, a mission of

charity and its fulfilment is the condition of our salvation. This is the economy of God. This is the meaning of misery in the household of God. There are no stepping stones leading to heaven but the works of mercy. Blessed the man that understands the plans of God and carries them out. "Blessed the man that understandeth concerning the needy and the poor." Blessed are you, my friends, if you realize the importance of the works of mercy and if by performing deeds of charity you gain the kingdom of heaven.

We will, therefore, try to study how we can help our fellowmen, what we can do for our suffering brothers and sisters, how we can diminish human misery. We will endeavor to imbue ourselves with the spirit of our Lord, by contemplating the rewards promised to the merciful. May our Lord inspire us with lasting and efficacious sentiments of mercy, may He kindle in our hearts true Christian charity toward all that are afflicted.

IMPORTANCE OF THE CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY

Our Lord Himself sums up the different ways in which we may relieve the bodily needs of our neighbor, thus showing how great an importance He attaches to these works of mercy. "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you covered me; sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me" (Matth. xxv. 35, 36). To these we may add as an extension of the care of the sick the providing for a decent burial of the deceased. In these seven works of mercy the manifold wants and necessities of our corporal existence are embraced. For this is what man needs: food, drink, a covering for his nakedness, shelter, a hand to nurse him in his illness, defence in his captivity and finally a grave. Where these are wanting they may be supplied by the charity of our neighbor and thus afford an occasion for the exercise of mercy. Let us repeat these seven corporal works of mercy to impress them on our memory and review them in detail. The Catechism enumerates them as follows: To feed the hungry, to give drink to the

thirsty, to clothe the naked, to harbor the stranger, to visit the sick, to ransom the captives, to bury the dead.

Have you, my friends, ever experienced the pangs of hunger and the fever of thirst? No, God has dealt out to you and your dear ones your daily dole of bread and refreshed your lips. But there are men, women—and alas—little children familiar with famine and the racking pains of starvation. The torments of hunger and thirst are the fiercest we can imagine; they rage like fire in the bowels and molten lead on the lips. Let not your brother suffer any longer the terrible agony of hunger and thirst; let him not perish for want of food and drink. Can you feast on exquisite morsels, while he is crazed with hunger? Go forth and seek the poor in whose famished looks and emaciated faces you read a long story of untold sufferings; put an end to their torture, give them out of thy abundance or break with them thy own bread. A heart of marble would be touched by the pleading, agonized look of starvation. Here there is need of immediate help; for nothing clamors louder for speedy relief than hunger and thirst. You will find many an opportunity to practice these first two works of mercy. For the need of food and drink is universal; and there is more famine and starvation in the world than we dream of. Turn not the beggar away from your threshold. Perhaps you have noticed in your neighborhood some poor children with big, frightened eyes, flattening their little noses against the show windows of a bakery shop or greedily looking on their more fortunate playmates enjoying their lunch! Ah, my friend, these children are victims of hunger. Be merciful; feed Christ's little ones. There are, if not in your neighbor-hood, surely in your village or town, starving men, starving widows, starving orphans, starving families. Go, and feed the hungry!

Only second to the pains of hunger are the sufferings resulting from exposure. Clothing serves a two-fold purpose; it protects the body against the inclemency of the weather and shields the sense of shame and the delicate sentiment of modesty. Physical torture of a high degree may be caused by frostbitten limbs or the fiery darts of the sun. And men-

tal confusion, as smarting as bodily pain, may be produced by the lack of a decent covering. Have pity on your naked brother and your scantily clad sister! Behold their rags! Cover the shivering flesh, livid from the cold and benumbed by exposure! Clothe the nude, that they may appear before men without confusion; spare their modesty, that it may not be dulled or cruelly offended. Many an occasion will present itself where you may supply proper apparel to the poor. Forget them not on Christmas day. Some children have not becoming dress for their First Holy Communion. Clothe them for this great ceremony, that they may approach the altar with external decency. Do not sell your old clothes, as long as they are fit to wear. Give them to some poor family, to an orphan asylum or to some benevolent institution. If you sell them, they will only bring a few cents; if you give them to the poor, they will earn an eternal reward. The highest price you will receive for old clothes when you give them to the needy. Kings have given their royal robes to the naked, thinking them none too good to warm their chilled limbs. St. Elizabeth covered a beggar with her queenly mantle, made of the costliest fabrics. Princely hands have plied the needle to sew garments for the destitute! Follow their example!

A sad lot is that of the poor street-arab, who has no house nor tent; a stone sometimes is his pillow, where he rests his weary head. Have you seen the leaking roof, the shattered walls and the broken windows of the dwelling of many a poor family? Have you ever heard of the terrible overcrowding of the tenement houses, the hotbeds of filth, contagion and moral corruption? It may be that some poor family is evicted this moment in the same street where your stately mansion rises, because the rent was overdue on account of a prolonged sickness of the father! Is this not an opportunity to harbor the stranger? There are more homeless and houseless strangers in a big city than in the deserts and wild places of Africa. Moreover, the homes for the orphans, the aged and the poor should form a steady item in your budget of charity.

The prisoner also has a claim to our mercy. Not that we should help him to elude well-merited and just punishment.

But we may alleviate the horrors and soften the gloom of his detention. We should help him to become a better man and especially assist him in finding useful employment after his release. Let us remember that our Lord was a prisoner, though innocent and free from guilt. Through Him even the prison is sacred ground and a field for the exercise of mercy. Charity and pity and humane treatment for the poor prisoner, though he be guilty of many crimes! And especially forgetfulness of his misdeeds when the gates of the prison have given him back to society. May he then again enjoy the name of an honest citizen and may no one cast a stinging slur on his past life. We will help him to enter the paths of honesty and protect him against a shameful relapse.

Who is more helpless than the sick? Who deserves our pity more and who has a greater title to our mercy than they? The sickbed is the synthesis of all human sufferings. Its dark shadow falls on every life. The sick are unable to help themselves; they are dependent on the mercy of their fellowmen. Not even a drop of water can they procure themselves, when their lips are parched with the fiery thirst of fever. Their feet refuse them service, their hands are weak and trembling! The utter helplessness, pitiful condition, the never ceasing pain of the sick cry aloud for mercy. God has thrown the sick on our mercy and He will demand a severe account of the treatment we have given them. Let us visit the sick, not to annoy them by idle talk and fruitless curiosity, but to assist them when the hand of God is upon them. We may brighten the weary hours of their long days and interminable nights; we may smooth the pillow on which the aching head reposes; we may cool the burning brow and moisten their cracking lips; we may provide for medical treatment and bring relief in many ways. Charity will suggest many little services we can render our suffering neighbor. But let us not expect profuse thanksgivings for our kindness from the sick; let us bear their impatience and ill humor, their vehement pains often make them peevish and fretful. Forget not, my friends, the lonesome, the bedridden, the neglected, the helpless sick!

The last service we can bestow on our brother is to honor

his earthly remains. The departed soul loves that body, which is now cold and rigid, and longs for the reunion with it. If we have assisted our neighbor during his life, let our charity not shrink from his lifeless form. Let us twine around his folded hands the rosary of our Lady; let us cover him with the solemn drapery of the shroud; let us accompany him to his last resting place. This will honor the memory of the deceased and comfort the afflicted relatives. Visit the lonely grave; do not permit the little mound to be beaten down or the tombstone to decay; there is such a reproachful pathos in a neglected, forgotten tomb, over which the weeds have grown and where never a prayer is whispered.

The mere sight of the misery of mankind is sufficient to arouse our pity and to prompt spontaneous deeds of kindness. But that the fountains of mercy may well up more abundantly in our heart and may never fail, we will consider the higher motives for the practice of mercy; the eternal, powerful motives, derived from our holy faith.

MOTIVES OF CHRISTIAN MERCY

We are one great family. God is our Father. We are His children. They that suffer, they that want, are our brothers and sisters. Do we not remember the words of our Lord: "A new commandment I give unto: That you love one another as I have loved you" (St. John xiii. 34). But is that love, that will turn a deaf ear to the plaintive petitions of his brother? "And if a brother or sister be naked, and want daily food; and one of you say to them: go in peace, be you warmed and fed; yet give them not those things that are necessary for the body; what shall it profit" (St. James ii. 15). "My little children," said St. John, "let us not love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth." The corporal works of mercy are the touchstone of genuine Christian charity. Man's bodily wants impress themselves more forcibly on our attention, they excite our sympathy more easily and stand forth in bolder relief. He who has no feeling for the corporal needs of his fellowmen, has no feeling for them at all. Men suspect

a purely spiritual charity that neglects their crying bodily wants. The corporal works of mercy attest themselves and are above cavil and prejudice. They shine with a splendor as that of the sun and triumphantly conquer the hearts of men. Our Lord did not disdain to minister to the temporal wants of His hearers. He who helps not His neighbor is an unworthy member of the family of God. He who will not consider his suffering neighbor as his brother can not have God for a father.

What exalts Christian charity above natural benevolence and philanthropy is the fact that the Christian recognizes in the poor and needy the very person of our Lord. Christ identifies Himself with the poor: "Amen I say to you, as long as you did it to one of these my least brethren, you did it to me" (Matth. xxv. 40). This is, indeed, a startling statement. But we must literally accept it. When St. Martin had given his cloak to a wretched beggar, our Lord appeared to him in the following night. Christ wore the cloak of St. Martin and showing it to the angels that surrounded Him He said: "This is the cloak which Martin gave me." A similar incident is related in the life of St. Elizabeth. This holy princess one day placed a leprous beggar in the bed of her husband, there being no other bed available at the time. Vexed at the seemingly extravagant hospitality of his wife her husband hurried to his room and removed the covering of his bed. But there he saw the bruised figure of our Saviour. Touched by this miracle he praised his wife and said: "To such a guest I am always willing to surrender my couch." For the eye of faith the poor wear the features of our Lord. Hence the great reverence with which the saints treated the miserable; they kissed their feet, as Mary kissed the feet of our Lord. They did not look down upon the poor, but touched them with a reverential hand. They ministered to their needs, not as conferring a favor, but as humbly serving them. The Church sends its best and noblest daughters, its unspotted virgins, the spouses of a King, to the bedside of the sick and into the wretched abodes of the poor. Christian charity is not overbearing or offending; it is full of reverence and tenderness.

It delights in performing the meanest functions for the poor. Yea, it is, indeed, a great thing to serve the King, to serve our Lord. Despise not the beggar that knocks at your door. Look at him with the eye of faith. Then you will see a glory on his brow, which is the reflection of Christ's majesty. Remember, my dear friends, it is Christ that suffers hunger and nakedness and poverty; it is the son of the King that is clothed in rags and begs his bread. Be not deaf to the voice of Christ, re-echoing in the pleading accents of the beggar's prayer!

A good deed is its own reward. We are never happier than when we have helped our neighbor. Kindness is an unfailing source of the purest joys.

> The quality of mercy is not strained;
> It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven
> Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed;
> It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes.

Let us sow many good deeds and we shall reap a harvest of joy. Mercy brings down upon us temporal blessings. Alms make rich. "He that giveth to the poor shall not want" (Prov. x. 12). Almsgiving has never impoverished any one; for the Lord will repay His debtor in due time. But the bread that is withheld from the poor will never profit the heartless owner. The wealth of the rich that oppress the needy will dwindle, as the snow before the sun. "Your riches are corrupted; and your garments are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver is cankered; and the rust of them shall be for a testimony against you, and shall eat your flesh like fire" (James v. 2). The heart of the merciless is like the burned-out crater of an inactive volcano: dark, barren, full of muddy waters and foul vermin. In the days of need, no one will help him. "He that stoppeth his ear against the cry of the poor, shall also cry himself and shall not be heard" (Prov. xxi. 13).

Before God we are all debtors and sinners. If God were exacting and dealt with us in strict justice, not one of us would escape. His wrath would devour us like fire. Our only salvation, our only hope, is the mercy of God. Our sins are before us day and night, glaring and red, crying to heaven and clamoring for vengeance. Who will blot out the sad

record of our many failings? Who will propitiate the just anger of our offended God? There is but one answer. Deeds of mercy will cancel our sins. Show mercy and mercy will be shown to you. "For charity covereth a multitude of sins" (1 Peter iv. 8). "For alms deliver from all sin and death and will not suffer the soul to go into darkness" (Tob. iv. 11). "Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor" (Dan. iv. 24). Wonderful power of the works of mercy! they make God forget your sins; they make Him smile and forgive, where He should frown and punish. And the keynote of the last judgment is mercy! "Judgment without mercy to him that had not done mercy" (Jas. ii. 13). Do you expect a favorable judgment; do you wish to find a lenient, merciful Judge? Do works of mercy. Let the poor plead your cause; they are the Judge's friends. Our hopes of a merciful sentence are bound up with the poor. The needy, if you have befriended them on earth, will fling open to you the gates of heaven. Your sins will be balanced by your deeds of mercy. The gold you have given to the poor will redeem your soul. Gold opens all doors; it opens the gates of heaven when placed in the hands of the poor. The merciful die with great confidence. They have many friends in the next world; aye, the Judge is their friend; for He was hungry and they gave Him to eat; He was naked, and they covered Him; He was sick and they visited Him. So He will say to them: "Come, ye blessed of my father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt. xxv. 34).

CONCLUSION

My dear friends, God has given us two hands. May they be instruments to help our fellowmen and to practice the works of mercy. How perfectly they are adapted to this task! How easily can we extend them to wipe a tear, to bestow alms, to rescue a fallen brother and to afford help in all circumstances. If they have been idle or busy in doing wrong, may they now be consecrated to the service of the needy and the poor. Let us not amass the dust of earthly wealth, but let us lay up

treasures in heaven by performing deeds of mercy. How powerful are merciful hands when raised in prayer! How readily the gates of heaven yield to the touch of hands that have been ever active and indefatigable in works of mercy! Amen.

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THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

CONFESSION

TEXT

Go, show yourselves to the priests.—Luke xvii. 14.

Analysis

Introduction. All Catholic commentators have seen in the cure of the ten lepers a type of the cleansing by Christ of the moral leprosy of sin, and in our Lord's sending them to the priests, a figure or type of sacramental confession of sins. The

faith which the lepers had in the mercy and power of our Lord, and the obedience which they manifested in carrying out His command are a fitting model of the faith and good dispositions which those should possess who wish to make proper use of confession.

I. **The meaning and necessity of confession.** 1. Confession is a declaration of personal sins to a lawfully authorized priest for the purpose of obtaining absolution. This declaration must (a) be by word or sign, according to circumstances; (b) it must be made to a priest who is validly ordained and who has either ordinary or delegated jurisdiction (Code, can. 872); (c) it must have as its end and purpose the obtaining of sacramental absolution. 2. The necessity of confession is clear from the following: (a) Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance when He said to His Apostles, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost," etc. (John xx. 22, 23). But this power of forgiving and retaining sin, which was to be exercised with discretion, could not be exercised at all without that personal declaration which we call confession; (b) Christ instituted confession, not as an optional, but as a necessary means of obtaining pardon, otherwise the power of the keys and of binding and loosing, which was given to the Apostles and their successors (Matt. xvi. 19; xviii. 18) would be of no avail; (c) that confession has been practiced and considered necessary from the time of the Apostles is evident from the writings of the Fathers and from the definitions of the Councils of the Church.

II. **The advantages of confession.** 1. Confession is a powerful means of promoting holiness and piety, as is proved by the testimony of all who have any knowledge of its use. 2. It is the least difficult means of obtaining forgiveness, because even imperfect contrition with confession is enough for pardon. 3. Through confession the sinner is able to obtain wise counsel and direction in a manner at once most secret and most competent. 4. The thought of confession is a powerful deterrent against secret sins. 5. Confession promotes the good of domes-

tic and civil society by securing peace and charity, by causing reparation to be made for scandals, injustices, and the like.

III. **When and how confession is to be made.** 1. Regarding the time of making confession the following points are to be noted: (a) confession becomes obligatory when a person reaches the age of reason; (b) all who are in grave sin after Baptism are obliged to go to confession once a year; (c) everyone in danger of death or about to receive one of the Sacraments of the living is obliged to go to confession, unless he is already in the state of grace. 2. Confession should have the following qualities: it should be humble, entire, sincere, prudent, and brief. 3. Confession should be *humble, i.e.,* not made in a boastful, but in a contrite spirit. 4. It should be *entire, i.e.,* it should embrace: (a) all mortal sins remembered since the last worthy confession; (b) the circumstances which change the malice of a sin or multiply it. 5. Confession must be *sincere, i.e.,* the sins should be declared just as they appear to the conscience without exaggeration or diminution. It should be *prudent. i.e.,* the penitent should confess his sins in careful words, and should guard against revealing the sins of others unnecessarily. 7. Confession should be *brief, i.e.,* the penitent should avoid irrelevent facts and details. 8. Consequences of the preceding points: (a) people should know how to make their confessions properly; (b) a bad confession should be repeated; (c) mortal sins forgotten should be declared in confession when remembered; (d) those who have no certain sins to confess should mention some sin of their past life; (e) general confessions are to be permitted according to the prudence and discretion of the confessor.

Exhortation. 1. We should have the highest reverence for this divinely instituted, necessary, and gracious means of obtaining pardon for our sins. 2. We should go to confession not only when it is necessary, but frequently in order to obtain grace and strength from the use of this Sacrament. 3. In order that confession may be properly made it should be preceded by a careful preparation consisting of an examination of conscience and acts of faith, hope,

love and contrition. 4. After confession we, like the Samaritan in to-day's Gospel, should return thanks to our Divine Physician.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

Confession

We now come to confession, which is another part of Penance. The care and exactness which its exposition demands, must be at once obvious, if we only reflect, that most holy persons are firmly persuaded that whatever of piety, of holiness, of religion, has been preserved to our times in the Church, through God's goodness, must be ascribed in a great measure, to the influence of confession. It cannot, therefore, be a matter of surprise, that the enemy of the human race, in his efforts to destroy utterly the Catholic Church should, through the agency of the ministers of his wicked designs, have assailed with all his might this bulwark of Christian virtue. The pastor, therefore, will show in the first place that the institution of confession is most useful and even necessary.

CONFESSION IS USEFUL AND NECESSARY FOR REMISSION OF SIN

Contrition, it is true, blots out sin; but who does not know that to effect this it must be so intense, so ardent, so vehement, as to bear a proportion to the magnitude of the crimes which it effaces? This is a degree of contrition which few reach, and hence, through perfect contrition alone, very few indeed could hope to obtain the pardon of their sins. It therefore became necessary that the most merciful Lord should provide a less difficult means of salvation; and this He has done, in His admirable wisdom, by giving to His Church the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

According to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, a doctrine firmly to be believed and professed by all her children, if the sinner have a sincere sorrow for his sins and a firm resolution of avoiding them in future, although he bring not with him that contrition which may be sufficient of itself to obtain the pardon

of sin, his sins are forgiven through the power of the keys, when he confesses them properly to the priest. Justly, then, do the Holy Fathers proclaim, that by the keys of the Church, the gate of heaven is thrown open,[1] a truth which no one can doubt since the Council of Florence has decreed that the effect of Penance is absolution from sin.[2]

CONFESSION IS A REMEDY AGAINST FUTURE SINS

To appreciate the advantages of confession we should not lose sight of an argument which has the sanction of experience. To those who have led immoral lives nothing is found so useful towards a reformation of morals as sometimes to disclose their secret thoughts, their words, their actions, to a prudent and faithful friend, who can assist them by his advice and co-operation. For the same reason it must prove most salutary to those whose minds are agitated by the consciousness of guilt to make known the diseases and wounds of their souls to the priest, as the vicegerent of Jesus Christ, bound to eternal secrecy by the strictest of laws. In the tribunal of penance they will find immediate remedies, the healing qualities of which will not only remove the present malady, but also prove of such lasting efficacy as to be, in future, an antidote against the easy approach of the same moral disease.

CONFESSION SAVES SOCIETY FROM MANY EVILS

Another advantage derivable from confession, too important to be omitted, is that confession contributes powerfully to the preservation of social order. Abolish sacramental confession, and that moment you deluge society with all sorts of secret crimes—crimes too, and others of still greater enormity, which men, once that they have been depraved by vicious habits, will not dread to commit in open day. The salutary shame that attends confession restrains licentiousness, bridles desire, and coerces the evil propensities of corrupt nature.

[1] Ambr., serm. 1, de quadrag.; quoted in de pœnit. dist. 1 c. ecce nunc.; August, lib. 2 de adul. conjug. 59; Chrysost., de sacerdot. lib. 3.
[2] In decree of Eugene IV; de pœnit. dist. 6. c. sacerdos.

THE NATURE OF CONFESSION

Having explained the advantages of confession, the pastor will next unfold its nature and efficacy. Confession, then, is defined "A sacramental accusation of one's sins, made to obtain pardon by virtue of the keys."

It is rightly called "an accusation," because sins are not to be told as if the sinner boasted of his crimes, as they do "who are glad when they have done evil";[3] nor are they to be related as stories told for the sake of amusing idle listeners. They are to be confessed as matters of self-accusation, with a desire, as it were, to avenge them on ourselves.

We confess our sins with a view "to obtain pardon." In this respect the tribunal of penance differs from other tribunals, which take cognizance of capital offences, and before which a confession of guilt does not secure acquittal and pardon, but penalty and punishment.

The definition of confession by the Fathers,[4] although different in words, is substantially the same. "Confession," says St. Augustine, is the disclosure of a secret disease, with the hope of obtaining a cure";[5] and St. Gregory: "Confession is a detestation of sins."[6] Both of these opinions accord with, and are contained in the preceding definition.

CONFESSION INSTITUTED BY CHRIST

In the next place, it is a duty of greatest moment that the pastor unhesitatingly teach that this Sacrament owes its institution to the singular goodness and mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ, who ordered all things well, and solely with a view to our salvation.[7] After His resurrection He breathed on the assembled Apostles, saying: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost,

[3] Prov. ii. 14.
[4] Chrysost., 20 in Genes.
[5] Aug., ser. 4 de verbis Domini.
[6] Greg., hom. 40. in Evangel.
[7] See C. of Trent, sess. 14. de pœnit. c. 5; can. 6; Aug., lib. 50. hom. homil. 49; quoted in de pœnit. dist. 1. c. agite; Orig., hom. 1. in Psal. 31; Chrysost., de sacerd. lib. 3.

whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." [8]

Our Lord seems to have signified the same thing when, having raised Lazarus from the dead, He commanded His Apostles to loose him from the bands in which he was bound.[9] This is the interpretation of St. Augustine. "The priests," he says, "can now do more: they can exercise greater clemency towards those who confess, and whose sins they forgive. The Lord, in giving over Lazarus, whom He had already raised from the dead, to be loosed by the hands of His disciples, wished us to understand that to priests was given the power of loosing." [10]

To this also refers the command given by our Lord to the lepers cured on the way, that they show themselves to the priests, and subject themselves to their judgment.[11]

Invested, then, as they are, by our Lord with power to remit and retain sins, priests are evidently appointed judges of the matter on which they are to pronounce; and since, according to the wise admonition of the Council of Trent, we cannot form an accurate judgment on any matter, or award to crime a just proportion of punishment without having previously examined and made ourselves well acquainted with the case, it follows that the penitent is obliged to make known to the priest, through the medium of confession, each and every sin.[12]

This doctrine the pastor will teach as defined by the holy synod of Trent, and handed down by the uniform doctrine of the Catholic Church. An attentive perusal of the Fathers will present innumerable passages throughout their works, proving in the clearest terms that this Sacrament was instituted by our Lord, and that the law of sacramental confession, which, from the Greek, they call "exomologesis," and "exagoreusis," is to

[8] John xx. 22, 23.
[9] John xi. 44.
[10] De vera et falsa pœnit. c. 16; serm. 8. de verbis Domini.
[11] Luke xvii. 14.
[12] Sess. 10. c. 5; can. 7. de pœnit. That priests are the appointed judges of sins is taught by August., lib. 20. de civit. Dei, c. 9; Jerome, epist. 1. ad Heliod.; Chrysost., lib. 3. de Sacerd.; hom. 5. de verbis Isaiæ; Greg., hom. 26. in Evang.; Ambr., lib. 2. de Cain, cap. 4; C. of Trent, sess. 14. de pœnit. c. 5. can. 7.

be received as true Gospel teaching. And if we seek figures in the Old Testament, the different kinds of sacrifices which were offered by the priests for the expiation of different sorts of sins seem, beyond all doubt, to have reference to sacramental confession.

RITES AND CEREMONIES USED AT CONFESSION

Not only are the faithful to be taught that confession was instituted by our Lord; they are also to be reminded that, by authority of the Church, have been added certain rites and solemn ceremonies, which, although not essential to the Sacrament, serve to place its dignity more fully before the eyes of the penitent, and to prepare his soul, so that, kindled with devotion, he may more easily receive the grace of the Sacrament. When, with uncovered head, and bended knees, with eyes fixed on the earth, and hands raised in supplication to heaven, and with other indications of Christian humility not essential to the Sacrament, we confess our sins, our minds are thus deeply impressed with a clear conviction of the heavenly virtue of the Sacrament, and also of the necessity of humbly imploring and of earnestly importuning the mercy of God.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION

Nor let it be supposed that, although confession was instituted by our Lord its use was not declared by Him necessary. The faithful must be impressed with the conviction that he who is dead in sin is to be recalled to spiritual life by means of sacramental confession, a truth clearly conveyed by our Lord Himself, when, by a most beautiful metaphor, he calls the power of administering this Sacrament, "the key of the kingdom of heaven." [13] Just as no one can enter any place without the help of him who has the keys, so no one is admitted to heaven unless its gates be unlocked by the priests to whose custody the Lord gave the keys.

This power would otherwise be of no use in the Church. If heaven can be entered without the power of the keys, in vain

[13] Matt xvi. 19.

would they to whom the keys were given seek to prevent entrance within its portals. This thought was familiar to the mind of St. Augustine. "Let no man," he says, "say within himself: 'I repent in secret to the Lord, God, who has power to pardon me, and knows the inmost sentiments of my heart.' Was there, then, no reason for saying 'whatsoever you loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven';[14] no reason why the keys were given to the Church of God?"[15] The same doctrine is taught by St. Ambrose in his treatise on Penance, when refuting the heresy of the Novations who asserted that the power of forgiving sins belonged solely to God. "Who," says he, "yields greater reverence to God, he who obeys or he who resists his commands? God commands us to obey his ministers; and by obeying them, we honor God alone."[16]

THE AGE AT WHICH CONFESSION BECOMES A DUTY

As the law of confession was no doubt enacted and established by our Lord Himself, it is our duty to ascertain, on whom, at what age, and at what period of the year, it becomes obligatory. According to the canon of the Council of Lateran, which begins: "Omnis utriusque sexus," no person is bound by the law of confession until he has arrived at the use of reason,—a time determinable by no fixed number of years.[17] It may, however, be laid down as a general principle, that children are bound to go to confession, as soon as they are able to discern good from evil, and are capable of malice; for, when a person has arrived at an age when he must begin to attend to the work of his salvation, he is bound to confess his sins to a priest, since there is no other salvation for one whose conscience is burdened with sin.

AT WHAT TIME

In the same canon the Church has defined the period, within which we are bound to discharge the duty of confession. It

[14] Lib. 50. hom. 49.
[15] Matt. xviii. 18.
[16] Lib. 1. de pœnit. 2.
[17] Lat. conc. cap. 22.

commands all the faithful to confess their sins at least once a year.[18] If, however, we consult our eternal interests, we will certainly not neglect to have recourse to confession as often, at least, as we are in danger of death, or undertake to perform any act incompatible with the state of sin, such as to administer or receive the Sacraments. The same rule should be strictly followed when we are apprehensive of forgetting some sin, into which we may have fallen; for we cannot confess sins unless we remember them, neither do we obtain pardon unless through confession, our sins are blotted out.

THE QUALITIES OF CONFESSION

But since in confession many things are to be observed, some of which are essential, some not essential to the Sacrament, the faithful are to be carefully instructed on all these matters. The pastor can have access to works from which such instructions may easily be drawn.

I. CONFESSION SHOULD BE ENTIRE

He will teach first of all that a chief requisite for confession is that it be complete and entire. All mortal sins must be revealed to the priest. Venial sins, which do not separate us from the grace of God, and into which we frequently fall, although they may be usefully confessed, as the experience of the pious proves, may be omitted without sin, and expiated by a variety of other means.[19] Mortal sins, as we have already said, are all to be made matter of confession, even though they be most secret, or be opposed to the last two Commandments of the Decalogue. Such secret sins often inflict deeper wounds on the soul, than those which are committed openly and publicly.

So the Council of Trent[20] has defined, and such has been the constant teaching of the Church, as the Fathers declare. St. Ambrose speaks thus: "Without the confession of his sin, no

[18] Lat. conc. cap. 21.

[19] How venial sins are remitted see Aug., in Ench. cap. 71; quoted in de pœnit. dist. 3. c, de quotidianis, and in C. of Toledo 4, cap. 9.

[20] Sess. 14. de pœnit. c. 5. et can. 7.

man can be justified from his sin." [21] In confirmation of the same doctrine, St. Jerome, on Ecclesiastes, says: "If the serpent, the devil, has secretly and without the knowledge of a third person, bitten anyone, and has infused into him the poison of sin; if unwilling to disclose his wound to his brother or master, he is silent and will not do penance, his master, who has power to cure him, can render him no service." The same doctrine we find in St. Cyprian, in his sermon on the lapsed. "Although guiltless," he says, "of the heinous crime of sacrificing to idols, or of having purchased certificates to that effect; yet, as they entertained the thought of doing so, they should confess it with grief to the priest of God." [22] In fine, such is the unanimous voice, such the unvarying record of all the Doctors of the Church.[23]

CIRCUMSTANCES OF SIN THAT MUST BE CONFESSED

In confession we should employ all that care and exactness which we usually bestow upon worldly concerns of great moment, and all our efforts should be directed to the cure of our soul's wounds and to the destruction of the roots of sin. We should not be satisfied with the bare enumeration of our mortal sins, but should mention such circumstances as considerably aggravate or extenuate their malice. Some circumstances are so serious as of themselves to constitute mortal guilt. On no account whatever, therefore, are such circumstances to be omitted. Thus if one man has killed another, he must state whether his victim was a layman or an ecclesiastic. Or, if he has had sinful relations with a woman, he must state whether the female was married or unmarried, a relative or a person consecrated to God by vow. These circumstances change the nature of the sins; so that the first kind of unlawful intercourse is called by theologians simple fornication, the

[21] Lib. de Paradiso, c. 4. c. 1. super illud: si mordeat serpens.

[22] Circa finem.

[23] The necessity of confessing all mortal sins is taught by August., lib. de vera et falsa pœnit. cap. 10; Gregor., homil. 10. super Eze.; Ambr., lib. de parad. cap. 14; Jerome, in Ecclesiast. c. 20; Cypr., de lapsis towards the end; see also de pœnit. dist. 3. cap. sunt plures, etc., pluit; ibid. dist. 1 c. quem pœn. & ibid. passim.

second adultery, the third incest, and the fourth sacrilege. Again, theft is numbered in the catalogue of sins. But if a person has stolen five dollars his sin is less grievous than if he had stolen five hundred or a thousand dollars, or an immense sum; and if the stolen money belonged to the Church, the sin would be still more grievous. The same rule applies to the circumstances of time and place, but the examples are too well known from books to require mention here. Circumstances such as these are, therefore, to be mentioned; but those which do not considerably aggravate the malice of the sin may be lawfully omitted.

CONCEALMENT OF A SIN IN CONFESSION A GRIEVOUS CRIME

So important is it that confession be entire that if the penitent confesses only some of his sins and wilfully neglects to accuse himself of others which should be confessed, he not only does not profit by his confession, but involves himself in deeper guilt. Such an enumeration of sins cannot be called sacramental confession; on the contrary, the penitent must repeat his confession, not omitting to accuse himself of having, under the semblance of confession, profaned the sanctity of the Sacrament.

OMISSION OF A SIN THROUGH FORGETFULNESS DOES NOT RENDER IT NECESSARY TO REPEAT THE CONFESSION

But should the confession seem defective, either because the penitent forgot some grievous sins, or because although intent on confessing all his sins, he did not examine the recesses of his conscience with extraordinary minuteness, he is not bound to repeat his confession. It will be sufficient, when he recollects the sins which he had forgotten, to confess them to a priest on a future occasion.

We are not, however, to examine our consciences with careless indifference, or to be so negligent in recalling our sins as to seem as if unwilling to remember them. Should this have been the case, the confession must be made over again.

2. CONFESSION SHOULD BE PLAIN, SIMPLE, SINCERE

In the second place our confession should be plain, simple, and undisguised, not artfully made as is the case with some who seem more intent on defending themselves than on confessing their sins. Our confession should be such as to reflect a true image of our lives, such as we ourselves know them to be, exhibiting as doubtful that which is doubtful, and as certain that which is certain. If, then, we neglect to enumerate our sins, or introduce extraneous matter, our confession, it is clear, wants this quality.

3. CONFESSION SHOULD BE PRUDENT AND MODEST

Prudence and modesty in explaining matters of confession are also much to be commended, and a superfluity of words is to be carefully avoided. Whatever is necessary to make known the nature of every sin, is to be explained briefly and modestly.

SECRECY TO BE OBSERVED BY PRIEST AND PENITENT

Secrecy should be strictly observed as well by penitent as by priest. Hence, no one can, on any account, confess by messenger or letter, because in those cases secrecy would not be possible.

THE ADVANTAGE OF FREQUENT CONFESSION

The faithful should be careful above all to cleanse their consciences from sin by frequent confession. When a person is in mortal sin nothing can be more salutary, so precarious is human life, than to have immediate recourse to confession. But even if we could promise ourselves a long life, yet it would be truly disgraceful that we who are so particular in whatever relates to cleanliness of dress or person, were not at least equally careful in preserving the luster of the soul pure and unsullied from the foul stains of sin.

Sermons

Confession

BY THE REV. J. A. MCHUGH, O.P.

INTRODUCTION

No one can read the parable of the prodigal son without realizing how suitable it was that he should acknowledge his fault to his offended father before he would make his appeal for pardon. "Returning to himself he said: I will arise and will go to my father, and say to him: Father I have sinned against heaven and before thee: I am not now worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants." The eternal law of divine justice has resounded in human hearts from the day when God required from Adam confession of his sin and imposed a penalty. Admission before God of our sinfulness with true interior repentance is a requirement of the law of nature and has always been necessary for forgiveness (Council of Trent, sess. 14, cap. 1, 4.). It is most fitting that this internal sorrow and confession should be manifested externally, and hence our Lord instituted the Sacrament of Penance.

THE NECESSITY OF CONFESSION

The desire to make all reasonable amends for wrongs committed against our neighbors is a natural one implanted in every human breast. How strange, then, that only to the sovereign Majesty of God, who is justice itself, do some men deny more than a passing regret for their transgressions and insults? To placate the divinities of their false worship the ancient pagans were wont to consume their own children in the flames. Cruel and exaggerated as was their notion of God's justice, it was not more erroneous than the weak and sentimental idea which those have of divine mercy who are unwilling to believe that the Supreme Law-giver would exact even the slightest inconvenience in satisfaction for the greatest of all evils—offense against the will of heaven. Nay, to speak

with all due reverence, would it not rather have seemed strange to us had not the Supreme Majesty designated the conditions on which pardon would be mercifully granted and the benefits of Redemption applied to those who had offended?

What these conditions are, we well know. From childhood we have been taught that there exists in the Church of God a tribunal of reconciliation at which all who have fallen from God's grace after Baptism must present themselves to obtain pardon and be reinstated in their lost privileges. In order to obtain the merciful sentence of this tribunal God requires that we manifest our sins with repentance and purpose of amendment to his appointed representatives. Confession of sins in the Sacrament of Penance is, therefore, the means divinely appointed for obtaining God's forgiveness.

Far back in the time of Moses the practice of confession was commanded and enforced as a legal observance conducive to penance. For God said to Moses: "Say to the children of Israel: When a man or woman shall have committed any of all the sins that men are wont to commit, and by negligence shall have transgressed the commandment of the Lord and offended, they shall confess their sins" (Numbers v. 6, 7). Other texts might be quoted to show that confession was practiced among the Jews as an act of penance, and that this was enjoined by divine precept (Lev. xvi. 21, 22; Num. xv. 22–29; Lev. xxiii. 19; vi. 1–7; xii. 6–8). The practice continued among them till the coming of Christ. For when St. John the Baptist was preaching and baptizing "there went out to him Jerusalem and all Judea, and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. iii. 1, 2, 5, 6).

The practice of confession which God required in the Old Law as a legal observance and as a measure conducive to repentance, was raised in the New Dispensation to a Sacramental dignity. Jesus Christ has made confession an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance and a necessary condition of pardon.

On the very day of His Resurrection our Lord appeared to His Apostles and said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, whose

sins you shall retain they are retained" (John xx. 22, 23). Thus we see that the Apostles and their successors, the Bishops and priests of the Church, have received from Christ a twofold power—that of forgiving and that of retaining sins. Now it is clear that the priest must exercise the power of forgiving and retaining sins with discretion, since our Lord conferred this power not for the harm, but for the benefit of souls. In other words, the priest must decide in each case whether sins should be forgiven or retained. To do this, however, it is needful that the priest know the sins and dispositions of the penitent—a knowledge which is plainly impossible, short of a divine revelation, except through a manifestation on the part of the sinner himself. Just as a judge would be unable to pass sentence without knowing the case, or as a physician could not prescribe for a sick person unless he knew the nature of his illness, so the priest cannot exercise his judgment of absolving or retaining sins without the confession of the penitent. Confession, then, is obviously necessary for the exercise of that power of forgiving or retaining sins which Christ confided to the Apostles and their successors; and as a consequence we find that it has been practiced throughout all the centuries of the Church.

Since by Baptism one becomes a member of the Church, and, as such, subject to its jurisdiction, it follows that only the sins he has committed after Baptism are matter for confession. The Church does not pass sentence on those who are without her pale any more than a judge decides cases outside his own jurisdiction (1 Cor. v. 12). While, therefore, sins committed before Baptism are washed away by the saving waters of that Sacrament, those into which the sinner falls afterwards can be forgiven only through the Sacrament of Penance.

According to the teaching of the Council of Trent only mortal sins must of necessity be declared in confession, venial faults can be pardoned without the use of the Sacrament. The reason for this difference in regard to the two classes of sins, mortal and venial, is found in this that when one is guilty of the former he is not in God's friendship but is a child of wrath; whereas he who has fallen into venial sins only is still in the

state of grace, can expiate his sins by many other remedies and so obtain, at least in part, the forgiveness of his faults.

THE BENEFITS OF CONFESSION

The benefits resulting to the sinner from confession are not all subsequent to the use of the Sacrament, as might at first sight be supposed. Even before the penitent has approached the sacred tribunal he is greatly benefited by the restraint which the thought of confession puts upon him. Just as evil-doers, out of fear of the sentence their crimes against civil authority will evoke from the judge, are deterred from many and grievous deeds; so the sinner is restrained from many dark and hateful sins just by reason of the fact that he foresees that he must declare them all in confession and there receive the penance and correcting advice which the confessor will impose on him.

Even more advantageous to the penitent is the help which he derives from the Sacrament of Penance during the time of confession. Then in a most secret and guarded way he is able to receive from a truly sympathetic friend instruction for his ignorance, counsel in his doubts, comfort in distress, and the indication of salutary means of overcoming the obstacles to his spiritual life and progress. It may be said that one could obtain these helps from pious reading and from listening to sermons, or again by revealing his troubles to his friends and acquaintances. But it is plain that in reading and sermons, however good, there is always wanting that individual and particular application which is found in confession; and as for the hidden revelations one may make to friends outside of confession, we all know that apart from the incompetence of the counsel of such persons, we can never repose in them that sacred confidence which surrounds the things told in confession. By reason of his office and special training the priest is the recognized spiritual physician, teacher, and father who alone can rightly and satisfyingly minister to the needs of the soul.

The benefits which come to the world at large from confes-

sion are also very notable and singularly due to this Sacrament. People are profitably advised in confession who will not and cannot be directed in any other way. Many persons are disinclined to take advice, or to heed the good counsel of others; but when they kneel before God in the tribunal of Penance, realizing through faith that their eternal welfare is at stake, that the priest is empowered from on high to give or withhold the absolution they crave, they are ready to hearken to his admonitions and to agree to the conditions of pardon which he imposes. In this way how many enemies are reconciled, how many scandals are avoided or brought to an end, how many injustices are repaired and occasions of sin given up? The whole world thus benefits through confession; and if every one were to make use of it and profit by its many helps, may we not say that sin and disorder would quite disappear from among men and peace and happiness reign in human society?

Finally, the peace of mind and soul which flow to the penitent from a worthy use of confession are blessings which he cannot otherwise enjoy. The assurance of pardon, of the restoration of God's friendship, of the release of an eternal debt which would weigh one down forever and bind him with everlasting chains—these are results following upon confession which nothing else in the world could secure. When the penitent declares his sins with sorrow and proper dispositions, the priest pronounces over him the words of absolution, which avail as much as if God Himself had uttered the words, because the priest takes the place of God with the authority conferred by Christ when He said, "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them," etc. (John xx. 22). The Sacrament of Penance is called by the Fathers the "second plank" after ship-wreck; and the joy of the mariner who is saved by the floating plank after the wreck, is a fitting illustration of the gladness of the sinner who has been rescued from eternal death by this spiritual plank which is termed confession.

So great and so manifest are these advantages resulting from confession that even heresy and unbelief have been compelled in admiration to witness to them. The so-called Reformers of the sixteenth century deplored the lack of confession among

their followers as the cause of every vice. And in our own times many Protestant clergymen and other prominent non-Catholics have not only applauded the benefits of confession, but have strongly advocated its institution among their adherents. A few years ago Rev. Dr. Stocking, Universalist minister of Allegheny, Pa., said he was persuaded that if the practice of confession "were taught and observed in our Protestant churches there would be less immorality," and that he knew "of nothing that would tend to produce a better state of moral purity than the obligation to make confession of individual faults." The Rev. Dr. Kilpatrick, a Presbyterian minister of Toronto said, writing of the confessional, "It is a blessed thing to preach the Gospel; but to get alongside of a soul which was defiant and obdurate—this is the thing which means the burden, the passion, the toil of the ministry." Elbert Hubbard, in his book, "Friendship and Death," says: "The confessional seems a crying need of every human soul"; and Voltaire in his Annales de l'Empire writes: "The enemies of the Roman Church, who have assailed the salutary institution of confession, appear to have removed the strongest restraint which can be put on secret crimes. The sages of antiquity themselves felt the importance of it." Many other non-Catholic testimonies might be cited, but we will conclude with the words of the Protestant philosopher Leibnitz: "The institution of sacramental confession is assuredly worthy of the divine wisdom, and of all the doctrines of religion, it is the most admirable and the most beautiful. It was admired by the Chinese and the inhabitants of Japan. The necessity of confessing sin is sufficient to preserve from it those who still retain their modesty; and yet, if any fail, confession consoles and restores them. I look on a grave and prudent confessor as a great instrument of God for the salvation of souls. His counsels regulate the sentiments, reprove vices, remove occasions of sin, cause the restitution of ill-acquired property, and the reparation of wrongs; clear up doubts, console under afflictions —in fine, cure or relieve all the evils of the soul; and as nothing in the world is more precious than a faithful friend, what is the value of that friend when he is bound by his functions

and fitted by his knowledge to devote to you all his care, under the seal of the most inviolable secrecy?"

THE QUALITIES OF CONFESSION

There are many qualities which a good confession should possess, but the principal ones are sincerity, fulness, and clearness. A few words on each of these will be proper here, in order that penitents may know how to make their confessions well and thus derive the utmost profit from them.

When the penitent kneels in confession to declare his sins the thing uppermost in his mind should be to tell his sins just as he remembers them to have been. He should be mindful that the priest holds there the place of God in his regard and should lay open the state of his soul with all honesty and candor, neither exaggerating, excusing, or diminishing anything he has done. A lie in confession is told to God, not to man; and if it be serious in nature, it renders the entire confession not only invalid but sacrilegious, thus adding a new and grievous crime to the penitent's guilt. Not alone those who exaggerate or diminish their sins are guilty of insincerity, but also those who seek to palliate their offences by lying excuses, or who deceive the confessor by ambiguous words, misleading replies, or by such a hurried or mumbled confession that the real state of the soul is not made plain. How unwise and foolish on the part of the penitent to add sacrilege to his other sins by concealing or covering over his present guilt, which if it be not manifested now to the priest, will to his confusion and everlasting disgrace, be made known on the last day to the whole world! People sometimes fear what the priest may think of them, forgetting that he is well aware of all the sins common to human nature and that far from being shocked or provoked by anything they may tell him, he rather rejoices with the angels in heaven over one sinner who is repentant more than over ninety-nine just who need not penance.

After sincerity, the next quality which every confession should possess is *entirety*. This means that all mortal sins, together with their necessary circumstances should be declared.

There is no obligation to confess venial sins, although this is advisable in the case of those which are more deliberate and for which most sorrow can be felt. Penitents, however, should remember when going to confession that they must always tell some sins, either from their present or past life. They must also have real sorrow, otherwise their confession is null and sacrilegious.

With regard to mortal sins which have certainly been committed, these must be confessed in their entirety so far as the penitent can remember; for if even one were to be deliberately concealed, the confession would be bad, and would have to be repeated. A serious sin forgotten at the time of confession should be told in the next confession. It is also necessary to declare the number of times each mortal sin has been committed, as nearly as one can recall after a suitable examination of conscience.

Finally, the entirety of confession requires that the circumstances which change the nature of a sin to something else which is serious should likewise be made known. Such circumstances are those which cause a sin to be an offense not only against one virtue or Commandment, but also against another virtue or Commandment, or which gives a new name to the offense. Thus he who takes what belongs to another is guilty of theft; but if he adds violence to his act his sin takes on the nature of robbery; if he steals from a church, he is guilty not only of theft, but also of sacrilege. In relating circumstances, however, the penitent should avoid all useless details and digressions as well as vulgar and indecent language; he should remember that the confessor's time is precious, even though others are not waiting to go to confession and that he himself is partaking of a sacred rite.

The next quality which belongs to confession is *clearness*, by which we mean that the penitent should so state his sins that the confessor can readily understand them. The confessor should not be obliged to resort to questioning in order to discover whether the penitent is really guilty of sin or what is the nature of his sins. For example, when a penitent accuses himself of bad thoughts or desires, or of having missed Mass on

Sunday, it is not clear from this unqualified declaration whether these things were mortal or venial, or perhaps no sins at all. Hence it should be explained whether or not the evil thoughts and desires were deliberate or consented to, and whether the missing of Mass was one's own fault or not. Again, the mere accusation of having sinned against the sixth Commandment would not give a clear idea of the nature and gravity of the offense committed, since there are many different ways of transgressing this precept. In a word, one's confession should not be vague and general, but definite and concrete.

CONCLUSION

The ten lepers who were bidden by our Lord to go show themselves to the priests were very happy to comply with the command. They fully realized the awfulness of their state, and far from murmuring at the condition imposed for obtaining their cure, they felt that very little had been asked of them. If we find ourselves infected with the malady of mortal sin, the same divine voice indicates to us the remedy: "Go, show yourselves to the priests." Confession to the ministers of Christ is the appointed means for obtaining our cure. If we realized the horror and wretchedness of the state of mortal sin, we should like the lepers, hasten to seek the remedy appointed by Christ, deeming confession not a burden, but a great mercy. But there are many who not only defer their conversion and delay to be converted to the Lord, but who even defy the command of Christ and the Church by neglecting to confess their sins at the appointed times. The law of God requires that in danger of death we confess any grave sins that may burden our consciences. But there are not wanting persons so insensible, not only to the appeal of God's law but even to their own spiritual welfare, that when they are prostrated with mortal illness they can hardly be persuaded to make their confession. The physical and bodily remedies are not neglected; but as for the priest and the Sacrament of Penance, they are looked on as a disagreeable interference. Again there are many who go on from year to year in the state of sin, disregarding the law of the

Church which requires that all who are burdened with mortal sin make a good confession at least once a year.

It is because men do not value sufficiently the many blessings God has conferred on us in instituting the Sacrament of Penance that they are unwilling even to obey the commandments imposed of approaching confession once a year and when in danger of death. Let us remember, then, what has been said of the need and advantages of this merciful institution, and far from being satisfied with the absolute requirements, let us have recourse to confession frequently and even when we have only venial sins to confess. A person who bathed but once a year would not be considered duly solicitous for his bodily health and cleanliness; likewise he who is satisfied with an annual confession is not sufficiently careful for his spiritual well being. If the Church requires the clergy to go to confession frequently, should not the laity be glad to imitate this example? Surely if the great privileges which this Sacrament places at the disposal of all were duly appreciated, it would be necessary to restrain rather than to urge and there would be hardly any who would not go to confession regularly once a month.

But what is even more important is that confession be made well. Before confession we should, therefore, examine our consciences and make acts of contrition and amendment, giving as much time and attention to this necessary preparation as a prudent person would give to his more important affairs. If we accustom ourselves to frequent confession and if each time we prepare with that diligence we should wish to use at the hour of death, how bountiful will be the effects? Our souls will be purified ever more and more, the debt of punishment diminished, the danger of relapse prevented. We shall thus have our loins girt, with lamps burning in our hands, and we ourselves "like to men who wait for their Lord when he shall return from the wedding" (Luke xii. 35, 36).

The Confession of Sins

BY THE REV. F. G. LENTZ

Go show yourselves to the priests.—Luke xvii. 14.

LEPROSY A TYPE OF SIN

Under the old law leprosy was looked upon not only as a type and figure of sin, but the result of sin itself. Hence men afflicted by this disease were unclean in the eye of the law; were segregated from their fellow men and had to dwell apart from their kinsfolks and relatives. Their lot was an unhappy one, for they were not only driven from the usual haunts of their fellow men, but should any come near them, they were obliged to announce their own disabilities by the cry of "Unclean! Unclean!" Moreover, they were so declared by the law of God, and any attempt to thrust themselves upon the companionship of their fellow creatures would have been a violation of the divine ordinance. They were not only physically affected, but were legally unclean. One might have existed without the other were it not for the law, for "where there is no law, neither is there transgression" (Rom. iv. 15). Now there is not and never has been any known cure for this dreadful disease. Men have been healed, but it has always been by a miracle, *i.e.*, the direct interposition of the divine power. Such was the case mentioned in to-day's Gospel. These men were healed of their infirmity by the power of Christ. In that case were they not at liberty, being healed, to go back to their friends? Not so, for the law held that they could not associate with their fellow creatures until their legal disabilities had been removed by the priest, so that in this ordinance of the Old Law we have a perfect type of the great Sacrament of Penance.

CONFESSION IN THE OLD LAW

At all times God has made use of the ministry of man to do favor to man. It was by the mouth of His prophets that He taught man. It was by the ministry of Moses that He liberated

the Israelites from bondage and led them to the Promised Land. It was by means of Aaron and his descendants that He made known his will to the Jewish people, and even now, when He acts directly for the healing of the unclean, His first instructions are "Go show yourselves to the priests" (Luke xvii. 14). Why? Because, as you are legally unclean, you can not go back to your homes or associate with your fellow men until you have made known your condition to the proper authority and been declared clean, *i.e.*, absolved by the priest. Thus we see that even under the Old Law the manifestation of one's condition was necessary to obtain absolution. If any one doubts this let him read the fifth chapter of the Book of Numbers, where it is expressly prescribed that, when men have sinned, "they shall confess their sin," etc. The same law is laid down in the fifth chapter of the Book of Leviticus. In fact, confession of sin has always been a prerequisite in order to obtain pardon, so that instead of confession being an invention of Rome, as our enemies would have you believe, it was well understood by the first Christians from the ancient practice among Hebrews. Edersheim, in his "Life and Times of Jesus Christ," says it was the custom of the Jews to go to confession before marriage. (Vol. I, p. 352, also note p. 353.) No one ever heard of God pardoning sin without a confession, and that, too, before man. David obtained pardon only after he had confessed to Nathan, and long before that the Jews confessed to Moses when they had committed grave crimes, in order that they might obtain forgiveness. Even in the natural order this practice is constantly followed, for the State is always merciful only to those who acknowledge their guilt and throw themselves upon the mercy of the court; and Scripture says: "Be not ashamed to confess thy sins" (Ecclus. iv. 31); again, "He that hideth his sins shall not prosper, but he that shall confess, and forsake them, shall obtain mercy" (Prov. xxviii. 13).

FORGIVENESS OF SIN

It is not easy to understand the objection of those who reject the idea that the Church of God has the power to forgive sin.

Every organization claims this power and exercises it. Even the sects, while denying it in theory, claim it in practice, for when a member has violated their ordinances they may expel him, but, on his repenting and fulfilling certain conditions, they receive him back again. The State, also, and every association, no matter for what purpose originated, all have a way and means by which a delinquent member may be restored to full fellowship. Now, why should not this be the case in that society instituted by Christ to impart the merits of His redemption to individuals? Surely there must be some way in which a man, who has been so unfortunate to lose his citizenship in that kingdom, may be reinstated. True, other societies will not claim the power of forgiving sins against God. They can go no higher than their origin, and, since they are human, they can only forgive offenses against themselves. This is very proper. But the kingdom of God is a divine institution founded for the purpose of ministering in divine things. Its purpose in this world is to reconcile the sinner with God, which would be useless unless the Church can pardon the sinner. Hence St. Paul says: "But all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Christ: and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation, and he hath placed in us the word of reconciliation. For Christ, therefore, we are ambassadors, God, as it were, exhorting by us" (2 Cor. v. 18, etc.). The Apostle must certainly have known of what he was speaking when he made use of the above language, which seems clear enough to any intelligent person. It shows plainly enough that the Apostle claimed the power of reconciling the sinner with God, since he was acting as ambassador of Christ in that very matter in which the Eternal Father had endowed His Divine Son, viz., the ministry of reconciliation. That he exercised this power is clearly shown by his action with the incestuous Corinthian, mentioned in the second chapter of the same book.

But in doing this St. Paul was only making use of that power which Christ had given to His Apostles after His resurrection. Having come to them in Jerusalem, His first salutation is "Peace be to you," and then He uses this remarkable language:

"As the Father hath sent me, I also send you. When he had said this he breathed on them, and he said to them: Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx. 21-23). Now, our Divine Lord did not use this singular language without some object. We know He was sent with full power to reconcile the world to God. This power He claimed, and we are not Christians if we do not acknowledge His authority in the matter. But He distinctly, and in so many words, says that "as the Father sent me, I send you." Either He had the power to do so or He had not. If He had the power, what was to prevent Him from so sending them? He did so in unmistakable language, and this commission is coupled with the extraordinary action of His breathing upon them and communicating the Holy Spirit. Only twice have we a record of God breathing upon man. In the first instance He gives man his natural life, in the second case He communicates to him a supernatural power, viz., the power of reconciling the sinner. "Whose sins you shall forgive are forgiven them, whose sins you shall retain are retained." It is impossible to impart a commission in more direct and positive language, and this text has always proved a stumbling block to those who would deny this power to God's Church.

CONFESSION NECESSARY FOR PARDON

But this commission conveys a judicial power. To exercise that power the judges in the case must know and understand the spiritual condition of the sinner. Without doing so it would be impossible for them to justly exercise the power here delegated to them. But how are they to know the condition of the soul that applies to them? How are they to know whether to forgive or retain his sins? Evidently there must be some manifestation of conscience, for that soul's state can not otherwise be known. For sin is in the will, and no man may know the guiltiness of another, except that man make it known. Neither the kind of a sin nor the culpability of the sinner can be known except by confession of the sinner himself. There

are a thousand and one acts of man which may seem serious, and yet no great culpability be attached to them. Want of malice, forgetfulness, ignorance and even circumstances, all have their part in determining a man's guilt. How then were the Apostles to know what they were to do with a sinner, unless that man manifested the spiritual state of his soul? Clearly it was impossible. And yet they had the commission to settle this matter with the sinner.

Whatever difficulties this matter may present to others, it seems to have occasioned no trouble to the Apostles, for St. Paul says: "With the mouth confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. x. 10). And St. John tells us that "If we confess our sins: He is faithful and just, to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all iniquity" (1 John i. 9). What is here set forth we find practiced both before and during the apostolic age. Those who heeded the words of the Baptist confessed their sins (Matt. iii. 6), and when the Apostles went out to convert the world they began by preaching penance. "Peter said to them: Do penance and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of your sins" (Acts ii. 38). And "many of them that believed came confessing and declaring their deeds" (Acts xix. 18). It was thus the first ministers of Christ exercised the power given to them when Christ said "Whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx. 20-21). Many were pardoned, but we have a noted instance in the case of Ananias and Sapphira when there was no forgiveness forthcoming.

After all, there must be some way in which a man may obtain pardon for his delinquencies, or else we may as well abandon hope. Man is not an angel or a mere spirit. He has a very substantial body, and it is through that body he commits most of his sins. Why then should not that body participate in the humiliation necessary to secure pardon? To do so it must use external signs or expressions, and confession is one of the most potent means. We may further ask why should a man be pardoned who is unwilling to acknowledge his guilt? True some there are who, running away with that saying of St. James "Confess your sins one to another" (James

v. 16), insist that the offender shall confess to the Church while denying the power of the priests of the Church. But we can not conceive how, if the individual has not power to absolve from sin, any number should possess this faculty. A multitude has no more power in this case than the individual, for it is the power of God which is exercised, and if God has not made some "ambassadors in the ministry of reconciliation" it is inconceivable how any number of those same helpless individuals could acquire that power by accumulation. It is a divine power which here energizes the fallen one, and no aggregation of finite beings can ever become infinite. Morover, that plan would be upsetting all precedent in such cases, for even in civil affairs the power is exercised by the individual and not by the multitude which compose the State. No man can give that which he has not, and St. Paul tells us that "all power comes from God." Hence while the individual in some cases may be chosen by the multitude to execute laws the power comes from God. But in this case not even the appointment comes from the people, for St. Paul tells us that "no man takes this honor to himself but he that is called by God as Aaron was" (Heb. v. 4). And all history, sacred and profane, teaches us that Christ chose out His own ministers. "You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you" (John xv. 16). It follows that no man can attempt this ministry unless it has been handed down to him by legitimate authority. Hence it is easy to understand why those who rejected that authority denied this power of man to forgive sins. But that question was settled long since by no less an authority than Jesus Christ, who replied to the Jews: "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins are forgiven thee, or to say, Arise and walk? But that you may know that the son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins" (Matt. ix. 5, 6), He healed the man of his physical infirmities. Having thus demonstrated His power, He afterwards, as we have seen, passed it on to His Apostles. To reject this truth is to refuse to believe Holy Writ and the testimony of all Christianity for fifteen hundred years. Among all the errors which arose from time to time it remained for the sixteenth century revolters to deny that God had provided a

means by which man might obtain pardon for his sins. That might not have been so serious had it not been for the fallacy they invented, that a man should confess to God alone. Outside of this absurdity that God should provide a totally inadequate means, one shorn of all power to help man in the most important needs of life, their proposition involves the idea that God's justice should never be made manifest. In their idea, no matter what sin a man may commit, he could secretly go to God and obtain pardon without humbling himself. This makes the criminal at the bar dictate to the Deity on what terms he is willing to come back. The sinner becomes his own judge and jury in the case. It is no longer what the offended infinite majesty of God may require, but what the sinner may choose to give. Practically he demands pardon without offering any recompense, which is contrary to all justice. God can not pardon the sinner without repentance, and, since the sinner has no rights in the case, if he wishes restoration to favor, it is not the sinner but God who has the right to name the conditions. Somewhere along the line the sinner must humble himself and acknowledge that "I have sinned against heaven and before thee; I am not now worthy to be called thy son" (Luke xv. 21). Then God may receive him back again. But since He has established the tribunal of Penance, that is the means by which this must be accomplished. How thankful should we not be that God has been so merciful to man. Not angels or the powers of heaven has He chosen to exercise this authority, but man, who knows the weakness of our nature, who daily comes into conflict with the powers of darkness and the wiles of Satan, and can sympathize with our ailments and help us in our need. We may look upon it as a humiliation, and it is, but as Tertullian says: "It is better to confess here than to burn hereafter." And having fulfilled the required conditions, we can arise with the conviction that as we have not been our own judge, but have submitted our case to that independent tribunal which God established, we have really been made clean and restored to friendship with God. Either here or hereafter, since we commit sins before man, must our manifestation be made. How much better then

to make it here than to have the whole world witness our confession. Here we are taken on our own valuation, for this is the only tribunal where man is taken at his own estimate, but in eternity we shall be judged without mercy, since we refused to accept the opportunity to acquire it, while the confessional was still open to us. "If we should judge ourselves we should not be judged" (1 Cor. xi. 31). But if we resist the grace of God and refuse to submit ourselves to His own tribunal, we can expect no reward except that of the proud Pharisee, who went down, not justified. For such the wells of mercy shall be dried up on that awful day, when Christ comes to judge the living and the dead.

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FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

GIVE US THIS DAY OUR DAILY BREAD

TEXT

Therefore I say to you, be not solicitous for your life, what you shall eat, nor for your body, what you shall put on. . . . For your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things.—MATT. vi. 25, 32.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. Among the many consoling and salutary directions given by our divine Saviour in His unparalleled Sermon on the Mount is the one we have just read, namely, that man should not be solicitous for the needs of his temporal existence. If the heavenly Father feeds the birds of the air, and clothes the lilies of the field, how much more will He care for the wants of His children! We must not, however, understand from our Lord's words that He condemns reasonable diligence and honest labor in acquiring our maintenance and corporal sustenance, nor that He is forbidding even prudent provision for the future. What He does forbid is that unreasonable anxiety, that pagan solicitude, that unrest and worry for the things of earth which really proceed from a want of faith and trust in God and His providence. Neither must we think that because God knows our wants there is no necessity of asking Him to provide for them. God desires our prayers, not to inform Him of our condition, but because it is good for us to pray to Him, since by prayer we are exercised in the virtues of faith, hope, charity, humility, and the like. Having, therefore, done our duty each day, both by prayer and labor, we should quietly repose in God's goodness, trusting to His bountiful providence to provide for the morrow.

I. **Temporal blessings asked for in the fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.** 1. In this Petition we ask for the needs of the body, in order that God may bless our efforts in earning our daily bread. 2. The temporal blessings designated by the word *bread* are simply those things which are necessary for our temporal life; luxuries and great riches are not included, since the spirit of the Gospel is detachment from the things of earth. 3. We ask in this Petition for *our* bread, to show that we do not desire what belongs to others; but the words *give us* signify that we are willing to share what we have with those who are in need, while the word *give* shows that all we have, whether we be rich or poor, is granted and preserved to us by God's bounty. 4. The term *daily* is used to remind us that we should not be uneasy or worried regarding the future, since this distracts the soul from spiritual things, and that we should not desire for the present what is immoderate, since life is short and our true home is above. 5. Finally, the expression, *this day,* shows that we should make daily use of the Lord's Prayer.

II. **Spiritual blessings asked for in the fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer.** 1. Since the soul, like the body, needs its nourishment, and is more important than the body, we pray also in this Petition for our spiritual needs and sustenance. 2. The food of the soul is first of all the word of God (Matt. iv. 4), by which we are enabled to know our duties to our Creator, to ourselves, and to our neighbor. This word of God, which is the teachings of the Gospel, comes to us through preaching, religious instruction, pious reading, and the like. 3. The Blessed Eucharist is in a special manner the food of the soul. It is also called *our bread* because it belongs to the faithful alone; it is our *daily bread,* as being offered for us every day in the Mass, and should be received every day by the faithful.

Conclusion. 1. We should thank God every day of our life for temporal blessings, especially after meals. 2. The best way honestly to succeed, even in temporal affairs, is to be religious; those who are good are rarely in *want* of their daily bread.

Here again note, that our Lord in this Petition directs us not to pray for abundance and luxuries, but for enough to sustain our temporal life, and to help us without impediment to prepare for the future life. 3. The social unrest of to-day is mainly due to an inordinate desire for temporal things, far beyond one's needs, to the neglect of spiritual things. Not only among the rich do we now find a feverish craving for abundance and luxuries in material goods, but also among the laboring and all other classes. This is at the root of the unrest and unhappiness of our age. The tendency now is to make this world and this temporal life the end and goal of our existence, to get all our pleasure and happiness here, little believing in a heaven hereafter. Attachment to the goods and pleasures of this world dries up and sickens the heart so that one is incapable of finding any real peace and happiness here, and is unfit to receive it hereafter. 4. Let us, therefore, by faithful attention to our religious duties, by listening to sermons, reading pious books, by prayer and frequent reception of the Sacraments, seek the bread that perishes not.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

The Fourth Petition of the Lord's Prayer

Give us this day our daily bread.

THE RELATION OF THE FOLLOWING PETITIONS TO THOSE THAT PRECEDED

The Fourth and following Petitions, in which we particularly and expressly pray for the needs of soul and body are connected with and subordinate to those which preceded. According to the order of the Lord's Prayer we ask for what regards the body and the preservation of life, after we have prayed for the things which pertain to God. For since man has God as his last end, the goods of this life should be subordinated to those that are divine. Thus the goods of this life should be desired and prayed for, either because the divine order

so requires, or because we need them to obtain divine blessings, that being assisted by these temporal things we may reach our destined end, the kingdom and glory of our heavenly Father, and the reverential observance of those Commands which we know to emanate from His holy will. In this Petition, therefore, we should refer all to God and His glory.

HOW TO PRAY FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS

In the discharge of his duty towards his people the pastor, therefore, will endeavor to make them understand, that, in praying for temporal blessings, our minds and our desires are to be directed in conformity with the law of God, from which we are not to swerve in the least. By praying for the transient things of this world, we but too often transgress; for, as the Apostle says, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought.[1] These things, therefore, we should pray for as we ought, lest, praying for anything as we ought not, we receive from God for answer, "You know not what you ask." [2]

MEANS OF ASCERTAINING PURITY OF INTENTION IN OFFERING THIS PETITION

A sure standard for judging what petition is good, and what bad, is the purpose and intention of the petitioner. Thus if a person prays for temporal blessings, under the impression that they constitute the sovereign good, and rests in them as the ultimate end of his desires, wishing nothing else, he unquestionably does not pray as he ought. As St. Augustine observes, "we ask not these temporal things as our goods, but as our necessaries." [3] The Apostle also in his Epistle to the Corinthians teaches that whatever regards the necessary purposes of life is to be referred to the glory of God: "Whether you eat or drink, or whatever else you do, do all to the glory of God." [4]

[1] Rom. viii. 26.
[2] Matt. xx. 22.
[3] Lib. 2. serm. Dom. in monte. c. 16; ep. 127. c. 6.
[4] 1 Cor. x. 31.

IMPORTANCE OF THE FOURTH PETITION

In order that the faithful may see the importance of this Petition, the pastor will remind them how much we stand in need of external things, in order to support life; and this they will the more easily understand, if he compares the wants of our first parent with those of his posterity. It is true that in the state of innocence, from which he himself, and, through his transgression, all his posterity fell, Adam had need of food to recruit his strength; yet there is a great difference between his wants and those to which we are subject. He stood not in need of clothes to cover him, of a house to shelter him, of weapons to defend him, of medicine to restore health, nor of many other things which are necessary to us for the protection and preservation of our weak and frail bodies. To enjoy immortality, it would have been sufficient for him to eat of the fruit which the tree of life yielded without any labor from him or his posterity.

Nevertheless, since he was placed in that habitation of pleasure in order to be occupied, he was not, in the midst of these delights, to lead a life of indolence. But to him no employment would have been troublesome, no duty unpleasant. From the cultivation of those beautiful gardens he would always have derived fruits the most delicious, and his labors and hopes would never have been frustrated.

THE NEED WE HAVE OF GOD'S HELP IN TEMPORAL THINGS

His posterity, on the contrary, are not only deprived of the fruit of the tree of life, but also condemned to this dreadful sentence: "Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labour and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life; thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to thee, and thou shalt eat the herbs of the earth. In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return to the earth, out of which thou wast taken; for dust thou art, and into dust thou shalt return." [5]

Our condition, therefore, is entirely different from what his

[5] Gen. iii. 17.

and that of his posterity would have been, had Adam continued faithful to God. All things have been thrown into disorder, and have sadly changed for the worse. Of the resultant evils, this is not the least, that the heaviest cost, and labor, and toil, are frequently expended in vain; either because the crops are unproductive, or because the fruits of the earth are destroyed by noxious weeds, by heavy rains, by storms, hail, blight, or blast. Thus is the entire labor of the year quickly reduced to nothing by some calamity of air or soil, inflicted in punishment of our crimes, which provoke the wrath of God, and prevent Him from blessing our efforts. The dreadful sentence pronounced against guilty men in the beginning is still recorded against us.[6]

Pastors, therefore, should apply themselves earnestly to the treatment of this subject, in order that the faithful may know that men fall into these perplexities and miseries through their own fault; that they may understand that while they must sweat and toil to procure the necessaries of life, unless God bless their labors, their hope must prove fallacious, and all their exertions unavailing. For "neither he that planteth is anything, nor he that watereth, but God who giveth the increase;"[7] "unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."[8]

Parish priests, therefore, should point out that the things necessary to human existence, or, at least, to its comfort, are almost innumerable; for by this knowledge of our wants and weaknesses, Christians will be compelled to have recourse to their heavenly Father, and humbly to ask of Him both earthly and spiritual blessings.

They will imitate the prodigal son, who, when he began to suffer want in a far distant country, and could find no one to give him even the husks of swine in his hunger, at length entering into himself, perceived that from the evils by which he was oppressed, he could expect relief from no one but from his father.[9]

[6] Gen. iii. 17.
[7] 1 Cor. iii. 7.
[8] Ps. cxxvi. 1.
[9] Luke xv. 14.

GOD IS EVER READY TO BESTOW WHAT WE NEED

Here the faithful will also have recourse more confidently to prayer, if, in reflecting on the goodness of God, they recollect that His paternal ears are ever open to the cries of His children. When He exhorts us to ask for bread, He promises to bestow it on us abundantly, if we ask it as we ought; for, by teaching us how to ask, He exhorts; by exhorting, He urges; by urging, He promises; by promising, He puts us in hope of most certainly obtaining our request.

WHAT WE ASK FOR IN THIS PETITION

When, therefore, the faithful are thus animated and encouraged, the pastor will next proceed to declare the objects of this Petition; and first, what that bread is which we ask.

THE WORD "BREAD" SIGNIFIES TEMPORAL NECESSITIES

It should then be known that, in the Sacred Scriptures, by the word "bread," are signified many things, but especially two: first, whatever we use for food and for other corporal wants; secondly, whatever the divine bounty has bestowed on us for the life and salvation of the soul.

In this Petition, then, according to the interpretation and authority of the holy Fathers, we ask those helps of which we stand in need in this life on earth.

IT IS LAWFUL TO PRAY FOR TEMPORAL BLESSINGS

Those, therefore, who say that it is unlawful for Christians to ask from God the earthly goods of this life, are by no means to be listened to; for not only the unanimous teaching of the Fathers, but also very many examples both in the Old and New Testaments are opposed to this error.

Thus Jacob, making a vow, prayed thus: "If God shall be with me, and shall keep me in the way by which I walk, and shall give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, and I shall return prosperously to my father's house, the Lord shall be

my God, and this stone, which I have set up for a title, shall be called the house of God; and of all things thou shalt give to me, I will offer up tithes to thee." [10] Solomon also asked a certain means of subsistence in this life, when he prayed: "Give me neither beggary nor riches: give me only the necessaries of life." [11] Nay, the Saviour of mankind Himself commands us to pray for those things which no one will dare deny appertain to the benefit of the body. "Pray," He says, "that your flight be not in the winter, or on the Sabbath." [12] St. James also says: "Is any one of you sad? Let him pray. Is he cheerful in mind? Let him sing." [13] And the Apostle thus addressed himself to the Romans: "I beseech you, therefore, through our Lord Jesus Christ, and by the charity of the Holy Ghost, that you assist me in your prayers for me to God, that I may be delivered from the unbelievers that are in Judea." [14] As, then, the faithful are divinely permitted to ask those temporal succors, and as this perfect form of prayer was given us by Christ the Lord, there remains no doubt that such a request constitutes one of the seven Petitions.

THE WANTS, NOT THE LUXURIES OF THIS LIFE ARE MEANT BY THE WORD "BREAD"

We also ask *our daily bread,* that is, the things necessary for sustenance, understanding by the word *bread,* what is sufficient for raiment and for *food,* whether that food be bread, or flesh, or fish, or anything else. In this sense we find Eliseus to have used the word when admonishing the king to provide bread for the Assyrian soldiers, to whom was then given a large quantity of various kinds of food.[15] We also know that of Christ the Lord it is written, that He "went into the house of a certain prince of the Pharisees on the Sabbath day to eat bread," [16] by which words we see are signified the things that constitute food and drink.

[10] Gen. xxviii. 20.
[11] Prov. xxx. 8.
[12] Matt. xxiv. 20.
[13] James v. 13.
[14] Rom. xv. 30.
[15] 4 Kings vi. 22.
[16] Luke xiv. 1.

To comprehend the full signification of this Petition, it is moreover to be observed that by this word *bread* ought not to be understood an abundant and exquisite profusion of food and clothing, but what is necessary and simple, as the Apostle has written: "Having food and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content";[17] and Solomon, as said above: "Give me only the necessaries of life."[18]

WHY WE PRAY FOR "OUR" BREAD

Of this frugality and moderation we are admonished in the next word of the prayer; for when we say *our,* we ask for bread sufficient to satisfy our necessities, not to gratify luxury. We do not say *our* in the sense that we are able of ourselves, and independently of God, to procure bread; for we read in David: "All expect of thee that thou give them food in season: when thou givest to them they shall gather up: when thou openest thy hand they shall all be filled with good;"[19] and in another place, "The eyes of all hope in thee, O Lord, and thou givest them meat in due season."[20] We say *our* bread, then, because it is necessary for us and is given to us by God, the Father of all, who, by His providence, feeds all living creatures.

It is also called *our* bread for this reason, that it is to be acquired by us lawfully, not by injustice, fraud, or theft. What we procure in evil ways is not our own, but the property of another. Its acquisition or possession, or, at least, its loss, is generally calamitous; while, on the contrary, there is in the honest and laborious gains of good men peace and great happiness, according to these words of the Prophet: "For thou shalt eat the labors of thy hands: blessed art thou, and it shall be well with thee."[21] Indeed to those who seek subsistence by honest labor, God promises the fruit of His kindness in the following passage: "The Lord will send forth a blessing upon thy storehouses, and upon all the works of thy hands, and will bless thee.[22]

[17] 1 Tim. vi. 8.
[18] Prov. xxx. 8.
[19] Ps. ciii. 27.
[20] Ps. cxliv. 15.
[21] Ps. cxxvii. 2.
[22] Deut. xxviii. 8.

Not only do we beg of God to grant us to use, with the aid of His goodness, the fruit of our virtuous toil—and that is truly called ours—but we also pray for a good mind, that we may be able well and prudently to use what we have honestly acquired well.

REASONS FOR THE WORD "DAILY"

By the word *daily* also is suggested the idea of frugality and moderation, to which we referred a short time ago; for we pray not for variety or delicacy of food, but for that which may satisfy the wants of nature. This should bring the blush of shame to those who, disdaining ordinary food and drink, look for the rarest viands and the choicest wines.

Nor by this word *daily* are they less censured to whom Isaias holds out those awful threats: "Woe to you that join house to house, and lay field to field, even to the end of the place: shall you alone dwell in the midst of the earth?" [23] Indeed the cupidity of such men is insatiable, and it is of them that Solomon has written: "A covetous man shall not be satisfied with money." [24] To them also applies that saying of the Apostle: "They who would become rich fall into temptation, and into the snare of the devil." [25]

We also call it our *daily* bread, because we use it to recruit the vital power that is daily consumed by the natural heat of the system.

Finally, another reason for the use of the word *daily* is the necessity of continually praying to God, in order that we may be kept in the practice of loving and serving Him, and that we may be thoroughly convinced of the fact that on Him depend our life and salvation.

MEANING OF THE WORD "GIVE"

With regard to the two words *give us,* what ample matter they supply for exhorting the faithful piously and holily to worship and revere the infinite power of God, in whose hands are all

[23] Isa. v. 8.
[24] Eccles. v. 9.
[25] 1 Tim. vi. 9.

things, and to detest that abominable boast of Satan: "To me all things are delivered, and to whom I will I give them," [26] must be obvious to every one. For it is by the sovereign will of God alone that all things are dispensed, and preserved, and increased.

But what necessity, someone may say, is there imposed on the rich to pray for their daily bread, seeing that they abound in all things? They are under the necessity of praying thus, not that those things be given them which by the goodness of God they have in abundance, but that they may not lose their possessions. Hence the Apostle writes that the rich should not be high-minded, not trust in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth us abundantly all things to enjoy." [27]

St. Chrysostom adduces as a reason for the necessity of this Petition, not only that we may be supplied with the means of subsistence, but "that we be supplied with it by the hand of God," [28] which imparts to our daily bread so wholesome and salutary an influence as to render the food profitable to the body, and the body subject to the soul.

WHY WE SAY "GIVE US," NOT "GIVE ME"

But why say *give us*, in the plural number, and not *give me?* Because it is the duty of Christian charity that each individual be not solicitous for himself alone, but that he be also active in the cause of his neighbor; and that, while he attends to his own interests, he forget not the interests of others.

Moreover, the gifts which are bestowed by God on anyone are bestowed, not that he alone should possess them, or that he should live luxuriously in their enjoyment, but that he should impart his superfluities to others. For, as St. Basil and St. Ambrose say, "It is the bread of the hungry that you withhold; it is the clothes of the naked that you lock up; it is the redemption, the freedom, the money of the wretched, that you bury under ground." [29]

[26] Luke iv. 1.
[27] 1 Tim. vi. 17.
[28] Opus Imperf. in Matt., hom. 14.
[29] Bas., hom. 6 variorum arg.; Ambr., serm. 81.

WHY THE WORDS "THIS DAY" ARE ADDED

The words *this day* remind us all of our common infirmity. For who is there that, although he does not expect to be able by his own individual exertions to provide for his maintenance during a considerable time, does not feel confident of having it in his power to procure necessary food for the day? Yet even this confidence God will not permit us to entertain, but has commanded us to ask Him for the food even of each successive day; and the necessary reason is, that as we all stand in need of daily bread, each should also make daily use of the Lord's Prayer.

So far we have spoken of the bread which we eat and which nourishes and supports the body; which is common to believers and unbelievers, to pious and impious, and is bestowed on all by the admirable bounty of God, "who maketh his sun to rise on the good and the bad, and raineth upon the just and the unjust." [30]

THE SPIRITUAL BREAD ASKED FOR IN THIS PETITION

It remains to speak of the spiritual bread which we also ask in this Petition, by which are meant all things whatever that are required in this life for the health and safety of the spirit and soul. For as the food by which the body is nourished and supported is of various sorts, so is the food which preserves the life of the spirit and soul not of one kind.

THE WORD OF GOD IS OUR SPIRITUAL BREAD

In the first place, the word of God is the food of the soul, as Wisdom says: "Come, eat my bread, and drink the wine which I have mingled for you." [31] And when God deprives men of the means of hearing His word, which He is wont to do when grievously provoked by our crimes, He is said to visit the human race with famine; for we thus read in Amos: "I will send forth a famine into the land, not a famine of bread, or a thirst of water, but of hearing the word of the Lord." [32]

[30] Matt. v. 45.
[31] Prov. ix. 5.
[32] Amos viii. 11.

And as an incapability of taking food, or of retaining it when taken, is a sure sign of approaching death, so is it a strong proof of the utter hopelessness of salvation, when men either seek not the word of God, or, having it, endure it not, but utter against God the impious cry, "Depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thy ways." [33] This is the spiritual folly and mental blindness of those who, disregarding their lawful pastors, the Catholic Bishops and priests, and, abandoning the holy Roman Church, have transferred themselves to the direction of heretics that corrupt the word of God.

CHRIST IS OUR SPIRITUAL BREAD, ESPECIALLY IN THE HOLY EUCHARIST

In the next place Christ the Lord is that bread which is the food of the soul. "I am," He says, "the living bread which came down from heaven." [34] It is incredible with what pleasure and delight this bread fills devout souls, even when they must contend with earthly troubles and disasters. Of this we have an example in the Apostles, of whom it is written: "They, indeed, went from the presence of the council rejoicing." [35] The lives of the saints are full of similar examples; and of these inward joys of the good, God thus speaks: "To him that overcometh, I will give the hidden manna." [36]

But Christ the Lord is especially our bread in the Sacrament of the Eucharist, in which He is substantially contained. This ineffable pledge of His love He gave us when about to return to the Father, and of it He said: "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him," [37] and "Take ye and eat: THIS IS MY BODY." [38] For matter useful to the faithful on this subject the pastor should consult what we have already said on the nature and efficacy of this Sacrament.

The Eucharist is called *our* bread, because it is the food of the faithful only, that is to say, of those who, uniting charity to faith,

[33] Job xxi. 14.
[34] John vi. 41.
[35] Acts v. 41.
[36] Apoc. ii. 17.
[37] John vi. 51.
[38] Matt. xxvi. 26; 1 Cor. xi. 24.

wash away the defilement of their sins in the Sacrament of Penance, and mindful that they are the children of God, receive and adore this divine Sacrament with all possible holiness and veneration.[39]

WHY THE HOLY EUCHARIST IS CALLED OUR "DAILY" BREAD

The Eucharist is called *daily* bread for two reasons. The first is that it is daily offered to God in the Mass and is given to those who seek it piously and holily. The second is that it should be received daily, or, at least, that we should so live as to be worthy, as far as possible, to receive it daily. Let those who hold the contrary, and who say that we should not partake of this salutary banquet of the soul but at distant intervals, hear what St. Ambrose says: "If it is daily bread, why do you receive it yearly?" [40]

EXHORTATIONS

In the explanation of this Petition the faithful are emphatically to be exhorted that when they have honestly used their best judgment and industry to procure the necessary means of subsistence they leave the issue to God, and submit their own wish to the will of Him who "shall not suffer the just to waver for ever." [41] For God will either grant what is asked, and thus they will obtain their wishes; or He will not grant it, and that will be a most certain proof that what is denied the good by Him is not conducive either to their interest or their salvation, since He is more desirous of their eternal welfare than they themselves. This topic the pastor will be able to amplify, by explaining the reasons admirably collected by St. Augustine in his letter to Proba.[42]

In concluding his explanation of this Petition the pastor should exhort the rich to remember that they are to look upon their wealth and riches as gifts of God, and to reflect that those goods are bestowed on them in order that they may share them with the indigent. With this truth the words of the Apostle, in his

[39] See Tert., 1. de orat.; Cypr., de orat; Aug., and others cited above at the beginning of the Lord's Prayer.
[40] Lib. de Sac., c. 4; see also de consec., dist. 2.
[41] Ps. liv. 23.
[42] Ep. 130, c. 14, n. 26,

First Epistle to Timothy,[43] will be found to accord, and will supply parish priests with an abundance of matter wherewith to elucidate this subject in a useful and profitable manner.

Sermon

Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread

BY THE REV. L. RULAND, D.D.

The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season. Thou openest Thy Hand, and fillest with blessing every living creature.—Ps. cxliv. 15, 16.

NECESSITY OF PRAYER FOR OUR DAILY BREAD

If in the springtime you go out at noon, when the warm rays of the sun are dispelling the cold of winter, you will hear the birds twittering on the trees. They are beginning their songs, and giving expression to their joy that spring has arrived; soon the flowers will appear and join in proclaiming God's praise. Our dear Saviour loved the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and so do all God's children. To those who keep their eyes fixed on the earth and fear to lose a moment when they might be making money, our Lord says: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your Heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Consider the lilies of the field; they labor not, neither do they spin; but not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these." From time to time some great hero of charity, relying on his Divine Master, has acted like the birds of the air and the flowers of the field, and forsaken all care for earthly things. In the gladness of his heart St. Francis of Assisi sang a song of praise when he possessed nothing, and had returned even the cloak he had brought with him from his father's house. But we cannot all act thus; we cannot all be care-free children relying absolutely on our Heavenly Father; most of us have to labor for our own support, and Jesus has

[43] 1 Tim. vi. 17.

taught us to pray for our daily bread, *i.e.*, for an adequate portion of the produce of the earth. This is the Fourth Petition, and it is not uttered until after praying that God's most Holy Name may be honored, that we may seek God's Kingdom with all the faculties of our soul, and that God's Will may be our guide in all our actions; then, and not until then, do we pray for our daily bread.

People of the present day laugh at us for praying thus, and tell us to work, rather than pray, for our daily bread. But Holy Scripture tells us that both work and prayer are necessary. "Unless the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it."

Let us go down from the Mountain of the Beatitudes to the shore of the Lake of Genesareth, and enter the city of Capharnaum, where the Apostle Peter dwelt. Anxiety for their daily bread had made him and his companions labor all night long, continually letting down the nets, only to draw them up empty. At last morning dawned, when, humanly speaking, they had no prospect of catching fish. They had sacrificed their night's rest to no purpose, and there were no fish to take home. Then Jesus entered the ship, and in His Name the nets were once more let down into the water, and, behold, the weight of the fish caught almost caused the boat to sink. This miraculous draught of fishes is a type of labor with and without God's blessing, with and without prayer for the daily bread. Yet though as a rule the activity of those who work, but do not pray, is not quite so devoid of result as was St. Peter's fishing before our Lord's coming; we must not forget that we can only plant and water the seed, and it is God who giveth the increase. Our daily bread grows on His fields. Men may plough and plant, but it is all in vain unless God's sun shines and God's rain falls upon them. Therefore it behooves us to pray. It is true that the rain falls and the sun shines upon both the just and the unjust, but God permits this for the sake of the righteous, who honor His Name and who uplift their hands in prayer.

MEANING OF "DAILY BREAD"

If we understand the words in their wider signification, daily bread includes all earthly benefits that can satisfy the heart of man. All are obtained by labor, and the desire and effort to secure them sets thousands of hands in motion. Acquisition and possession are natural consequences of labor, but there is another result that is eagerly desired and yet does not invariably follow, viz., happiness. Labor alone cannot secure it. To be able to work is a blessing, but to be forced to work is a curse, and in every age men have felt the latter rather than the former.

THE CHURCH BENEFITS MAN TEMPORALLY AS WELL AS SPIRITUALLY

If we stand and contemplate any of the great architectural achievements of the past, such as the pyramids in Egypt or the Colosseum in Rome, we are filled with amazement and admiration, but we should never forget that these vast buildings were constructed at the cost of the lives of countless oppressed and tortured human beings. The groans of those on whom the curse of labor rested have long since died away, and they are gone. The ancient world discovered no solution for the labor problem; prisoners of war were reduced to slavery, and it seemed so natural to regard part of the human race as devoid of all rights, that even the most enlightened lawgivers never attempted to alter this state of affairs. Slavery appeared inevitable, and upon the slaves rested the whole curse of labor. They received just food enough to maintain their strength; but otherwise they had no claim upon this world's goods, and the higher the degree of civilization in a State, the broader became the line separating the free-born, who enjoyed the fruits of labor, and the slaves, who endured the burden and heat of the day. Civilization intensified and did not diminish the hardships of their lot. Work was considered a disgrace, and those who had to labor with their hands were treated with contempt. At length, however, in the fullness of time, our Divine Redeemer came to lay, as it were, His gentle Hand on the brow

of the oppressed. His Hand was rough with labor and scarred with the nail that had fastened it to the Cross. The form that bent over the slave, and touched him with brotherly tenderness, was that of God, veiled under the outward semblance of a working man, and the words that He spoke were such as had never before been addressed to a bondman. Henceforth each Christian master looked upon his slave as his brother in Christ, and this feeling began, like a mysterious leaven, to work in human society, until at length slavery perished, and its place was taken by the spirit of love; labor was sanctified and ennobled by our Divine Saviour's example, and to toil was added prayer for daily bread, prayer in which master and man together lift their hands to their common Father in Heaven; together they go to the house of God to receive the bread of life and to draw water with joy out of the Saviour's fountains.

Thus the Church transforms and raises labor, renewing the face of the earth. No reproach brought against her could be more unjust than that she unfits men for life in this world by continually reminding them of the world to come. It has always been her endeavor to unite harmoniously things seen and unseen, the natural and the supernatural. In her public worship she makes use of forms of earthly beauty to represent the glory of Heaven. She employs music and painting to raise men's minds to supernatural truths; she bids a man place his body and soul at God's disposal, that thus he may mount up to the higher life. Not only does she allow, but she orders her children to exert their natural faculties in procuring what is necessary for life; only she desires all work for our daily bread to be penetrated with the thought of God. Her Divine Founder taught His followers not merely to cast their nets, but to cast them in His Name; not merely to labor, but also to pray for their daily bread.

Our dear Saviour, whose lips uttered the words of eternal life, satisfied the weary multitudes with earthly bread, and during the greater part of His life He earned His own food by a humble trade, not, as a rule, accepting the service of angels.

Although anxiety for our temporal welfare ought not to occupy all our thoughts, yet most people require a certain

amount of security with regard to their earthly existence, if they are to have time to turn their attention to eternity. A recognition of this fact is found even in those creations of the human intellect that have grown out of the life of the Church. We have an excellent instance of what I mean in the Order of St. Benedict. By taking the vow of poverty the members of this Order renounce all personal ownership, and once for all deliver themselves from the danger of caring too much for earthly possessions. A man who can call nothing his own, is free in the highest sense of the world, and stands as ruler over all worldly goods. Yet the brethren went forth day by day from their humble monastery, to cultivate the cornfields and vineyards, not for the pleasure and gratification of the individual, but for the advantage of the whole community, that all might be able to enjoy their daily bread in peace, and to raise to the Lord of the harvest songs of praise and thanksgiving, as well as to offer to Him their humble supplications by day and by night. When stately churches and conventual buildings were erected, they were no mark of pride felt by an individual owner, but were designed to give glory to the Author and Father of all beauty. The exquisite carving in the choir, the delicate tracery of the arches bore testimony to the one venerable rule *ut in omnibus glorificetur Deus,* and no petty squabbles regarding personal property were ever heard in a place dedicated solely to the worship of God.

THE MODERN STRUGGLE FOR LIVELIHOOD

The monasteries were abodes both of industry and prayer, as well as centers of civilization. If the nations of Europe can now boast of standing in the forefront of civilization, they owe it to Christianity; and although outwardly our modern life seems to have but little to do with the religious life of the past, it undeniably owes its existence to the bygone ages of faith. It is true that the conditions of life have altered, and that the labor, or, as men now prefer to call it, the struggle for our daily bread has changed its character. The substitution of the word struggle for labor is in itself significant; men can work

side by side, but they struggle one against another, and if their quest of food is rightly described as a warfare, they must certainly stand as antagonists opposed to one another. Moreover, our daily bread is not produced in our own country by our fellow countrymen; it comes from every part of the world, and the ships that bring us food carry back in return the goods manufactured in our thickly populated cities. The busy hands of our workers are aided by machinery. No longer does the employer of labor watch with fatherly care over his workpeople; no longer do they form one family, but an army, controlled and directed by countless overseers and foremen. No longer do our workshops resound with cheerful songs; not a moment may be wasted; every trifling mistake is punished by a fine, and men do indeed struggle rather than work for their daily bread.

The modern struggle for our daily bread does not leave much time for prayer, which is apt to be brief and hurried. But a struggle involves wounds, and does not satisfy the heart's craving for peace and happiness. Even a soul that delights in warfare longs for peace, and still more one that is weary of it. All our efforts tend towards the acquisition of a large share of this world's goods; idealists aim at giving the same amount to each, but they will never succeed in this endeavor. It is undeniable that recently the standard of comfort has risen greatly among the masses, and their tables are more abundantly and more luxuriously spread. Yet their desires remain unsatisfied, and contentment, the foundation of all happiness, seems further out of reach than it was in the days of small businesses and little farms. Capital, the soul of industry, is the force that sets in motion the working powers of thousands, and it naturally claims a large share in the profits. With ever-increasing annoyance do workpeople feel their dependence, and from time to time try by force of numbers to counteract the influence of capital. In the exaggerated bitterness of party strife they call themselves slaves, and both employers and employed form close unions for the protection of their rights and privileges.

We are all familiar with a number of difficulties that we

group together under the name of the Social Question. Whatever the solution of them may be, it will certainly not lead to peace and happiness, for these cannot exist where men resolve to live together on a strictly legal footing. Law may promote order, but only love can secure happiness. Therefore, if ever a solution is discovered for the Social Question, it will only be if Christian brotherly love takes on both sides the place of cold legislation. Religion and faith, not law and organization, will solve the problem, for faith is the victory that overcometh the world. In attempting, therefore, to settle the Social Question, the Catholic Church has only resumed her old rôle in civilization. It is a calumny when her enemies say that she attempts to console the wretched merely by holding out to them the prospect of future happiness. To those who complain of the unequal distribution of worldly goods, the Church must invariably reply that perfect equality can be realized only in eternity, when abundant compensation for all the sorrows of this life awaits those who love God. But this is not all. All attempts hitherto made to solve the problem have originated in the spirit of Christianity, and in State-legislation directed by this spirit. The Catholic Church proclaims the dignity of man, and the equality of all God's children; she tries to secure to the worker the sanctity of his home and the right to educate his children; she demands on his behalf fair wages for work done, and she consoles him in old age and sickness.

CONCLUSION

The whole question bristles with difficulties, for changes have taken place so suddenly as to find us unprepared; but the Church of Christ, God's kingdom on earth, will never lose her power and influence, and the Christian view of life will ultimately triumph. Charity will unite men, when rights and laws sever them. Although labor for their daily bread becomes a warfare, the thought that God is the Father of all, will bring them together in the bond of brotherly love. If ever men are to learn once more how to labor side by side, they must begin by praying together for their daily bread. We must pray every day, because every day we need fresh strength and new bless-

ings. Mankind has not nearly reached the end of its development; many conflicts still have to be faced, and many discoveries made. But God's power is inexhaustible; He will "heal the contrite of heart, and preach release to the captives." No statesman will succeed in reconciling the hostile classes, and no scholar will solve the problems of life, but reconciliation and solution will come from Him who has taught us to pray for our daily bread, and so bring the light of Divine Charity to bear upon our earthly labor. We may fail, but still we can look up to God with hope and humble confidence, saying: "The eyes of all hope in Thee, O Lord, and Thou givest them meat in due season." Amen.

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FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT: THE VICE OF ENVY

TEXT

Let us not be made desirous of vain-glory, provoking one another, envying one another.—Gal. v. 26.

Analysis

Introduction. St. Paul addressed to-day's Epistle to the Christians of Galatia for the purpose of correcting certain abuses and wranglings that existed among them. After he had established the Galatian Church, certain Judaizers—Christians

of Jewish origin—who were still zealous for the Mosaic observances, and filled with jealousy against St. Paul, came there and stirred up all kinds of misunderstanding among the converts, telling them that St. Paul was not an Apostle, asserting that those among them of Gentile birth were not Christians in the full sense of the term, thus putting one against another, and creating jealousies, dissensions, envies, and the like.

The vice of envy, then so prevalent in Galatia, is alas all too common at the present time among Christians and Catholics. Rightly is it called one of the capital sins, because hardly any is more harmful in its consequences, none more widespread, and none about which people are less scrupulous. Let us meditate upon this evil to-day.

I. **The nature of envy.** 1. Envy is sorrow or sadness at another's temporal or spiritual good, because that good seems to be prejudicial to our own interests or excellence. 2. Sorrow over another's good for other reasons is not the sin of envy. Thus for a person to be grieved at another's prosperity solely because he knew that would be harmful to the interests of others or to the public at large, would be an act of charity rather than envy. 3. Again, if a person is sad only because he himself has not as much as another, and seeks lawfully his own advancement and not the other's detriment, this is not envy but emulation. St. Paul admonishes the Christians to emulate one another's virtues in this laudable manner (Gal. iv. 18).

II. **The malice of envy.** 1. Envy, when voluntary and deliberate, is gravely sinful. 2. The enormity of envy is seen in this, (a) that it is directly opposed to charity—charity weeps with them that weep, and rejoices with them that rejoice (Rom. xii. 15), while envy does the contrary; charity makes friends of enemies, envy makes enemies of friends; (b) that it is opposed to reason, because it grieves over good, and because it yields to him who is guilty of it not the slightest advantage, but, on the contrary, annoyance and sadness; (c) that it is among the sins against the Holy Ghost and divine goodness, because, whereas

God draws good out of evil, the envious man draws evil out of good; (d) that it is so subtle as to hide its presence, and so low and mean as to make its possessor unwilling to admit it even to himself. 3. In its effects envy is one of the most dangerous of all sins: (a) from it proceed blindness of mind, perversity of judgment, hardness of heart, and the like; it was envy that made the Pharisees see evil in every thing our Lord did, and that filled the brothers of Joseph with such hatred (Gen. xxxvii. 4); (b) from envy come sarcasm, backbiting, slander, calumny, and all the multiple damage and injury that arise out of these sins; (c) envy causes plots, murders, treacheries, and public and private calamities of every kind; it was envy that brought sin into the world (Wisdom ii. 24), that instigated the first murder (Gen. iv. 5), that induced Saul to seek the life of David (1 Kings xviii. 9), and that led the Jews to reject our Lord and put Him to death.

III. **Remedies against envy.** 1. Charity is the mark of the true disciple of Christ, and nothing is more opposed to charity than envy. 2. To destroy envy we must destroy its root, which is vain-glory, as St. Paul says in our text. This we do by detaching our hearts from earthly vanities, the love of which is so productive of envy. 3. All feelings of envy must be suppressed at once, or gradually overcome through prayer for those we are inclined to envy, speaking well of them and promoting their good fortune when possible. 4. God blesses the charitable, but punishes the envious man (Matt. vii. 2).

Exhortation. 1. Perceiving the horror of envy we should examine our conscience regarding it very carefully, especially before confession. 2. Let us not seek our neighbor's harm, but emulate the better gifts, as St. Paul counsels.

Catechism of the Council of Trent

(See Fifth Sunday after Pentecost)

Sermons

Envy

BY THE REV. WILLIAM P. BARR, C.M., D.D.

INTRODUCTION

My dear brethren: Deep down in the human heart there lurks a passion odious, detestable, base; a passion against which God by the mouth of His Inspired Writers, has pronounced the most terrible anathemas; a passion which the Fathers of the Church denounced in terms of unmeasured condemnation; a passion which even the pagan philosophers and poets held up for scorn and ridicule; yet a passion—we are forced to confess it—from which few men are entirely free—envy, the ruling passion of the first murderer, Cain. It is against the effects of this vice that our Blessed Saviour warns us in the words: "Is thy eye evil because I am good?" Let us, therefore, turn our minds to a consideration of its source, its development and its consequences, that we may, with the help of God's grace, be moved to detest it, and, if perchance we discover that it has taken root in our own hearts, eradicate it without delay.

CAUSE OF ENVY

Now I maintain, my dear brethren, and it is the common teaching of the Fathers and Doctors of the Church, that the vice of envy springs immediately from pride. For what is envy? St. Thomas defines it as a certain sorrow or anguish of soul which one conceives at the good fortune of his neighbor; or a certain fiendish delight at his misfortune, inasmuch as he regards the good of his neighbor as subtracted from his own. The envious man, then, looks upon his fellow man not as being

a creature of God to administer to His own glory. For if he did, as often as he beheld his neighbor achieving that end by the full and perfect evolution of his powers, whether physical, moral or intellectual, he would feel an impulse not to sorrow but to rejoice. That the good of his neighbor fills the envious man with anguish of soul, is proof positive that consciously or unconsciously he desires to usurp the place of God as First Cause and Last End of all things. And is this not the very nature and definition of pride?

But at this point it is necessary to make an important distinction lest you confound with this detestable vice one of the noblest instincts of human nature. The Creator has implanted in each and every one of us a strong desire to seek his own perfection, and since this desire comes from God it cannot in itself be evil; nay, when directed toward its proper object and restrained within due limits, it is the principle and active source of spiritual progress. Of this St. Paul speaks when he says: "Be ye zealous for that which is good; emulate the better things." Hence, if beholding in our neighbor some good or perfection, we feel a desire to attain a similar good, this is not envy but zeal. Nor are we called upon to check such motions, but regulate them lest they degenerate into mere empty, otiose desires from which envy invariably springs. Zeal and emulation are positive virtues and characteristic of noble, generous and heroic minds: envy is a mere negation, born of baseness and pusillanimity. Indeed, in the judgment of all spiritual writers who have deeply studied human nature, emulation or the struggle after one's own personal perfection is one of the most potent checks which we can place upon this debasing passion.

EFFECTS OF ENVY

Turning to the very first example of envy recorded in Sacred Scripture, we behold in Cain the disastrous effects of this vice upon man's character. For beholding how God had accepted the sacrifice of his brother Abel and rejected his own, Cain grew angry and his countenance fell. "His countenance fell!"

What a depth of meaning in the words! They call up before our imagination the picture of the darkened visage, the downcast eyes, the sneering lips, the gnashing teeth—all the symbols as well as the effects of the darkened heart and a soul poisoned to its very center. Such is the nature of this passion: it has a power to rob man of all the joy and happiness of life. "O envy," cries out St. Gregory Nazianzen, "thou most just and unjust of passions! Unjust truly because thou woundest the innocent, but just, because thou dost not spare the guilty. Unjust, thou wouldst poison others, but sovereignly just thou beginnest thy selfish work within the heart that conceives thee." Can anyone deny the truth of this reflection?

The pleasures of life are derived to us from two principal sources: personal goods whether of birth or fortune, and social good or the friendly intercourse of man with his fellow men. Now it is of the nature of envy to effectually shut off these two sources of happiness. For picture to yourselves a man possessed by nature of more than ordinary physical and intellectual endowments: he may have inherited or acquired a fortune enabling him to lead a life of ease and comfort; happy in his marriage, he enjoys the society of a charming wife and devoted children. Surely such a one, as far as the goods of this life are concerned, might exclaim with the rich man in the parable: "My soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years: take thy rest, drink and have good cheer." But let the passion of envy take possession of his soul and straightaway all the sweetness of his life is changed to gall and wormwood, because the envious man does not reckon his happiness by what he possesses himself, but solely by the goods of his neighbor. His eye is always evil when the Master has been good to others. To such a one as this, as old Horace said, the neighbor's field is always more fertile; the neighbor's flock is always more prolific. And like Aman of old, whom King Assuerus had honored above all the Assyrians, the envious man will cry out: "Whereas I have all these things, I think I have nothing so long as I see Mordechai the Jew sitting before the King's gate."

If you tell me that this picture of envy is overdrawn, I

appeal to your own experience. I ask you to consider only what passes around you every day, and you will confess that far from being an exaggeration it is literally true. Why do that fair maiden's eyes flash fire? Why do her cheeks grow crimson red? Why that contemptuous sneer about her graceful lips? I will tell you: the name of her companion—perhaps her own sister—has been mentioned for praise and her soul is stung with envy. And why does that youth grow livid with rage when his fellow playmate has surpassed him in study or sport? It is envy. Why does that comely matron chuckle with fiendish glee when she hears of the domestic infelicity of her unfortunate neighbor? Envy! Why does that successful business man plan vengeance against his rival upon whom fortune has equally smiled? It is envy, the green-eyed monster envy!

Nor does its damning work stop here. Having robbed a man of that happiness to which he is entitled by reason of his good fortune, it cuts him off from the pleasures that are derived from social intercourse, making him in the midst of society a veritable exile, branded on his forehead with the curse of Cain. For whom does envy choose for its mark? Not the dead; not those far removed from us; but those in whose society our lots have been cast; nay, not infrequently those of our own household—our own flesh and blood. And when it has entered into the heart there is no bond of love, of friendship, of gratitude that it will not break asunder. To whom was Saul more indebted than to David—David the shepherd-boy whose harp had so often tamed the evil spirit that tormented him; David by whose hand he slew Goliath and turned the opprobrium of Israel into a triumph? Yet a single sentence served to obliterate from his mind all these claims and change his love to hate. "Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands!" Like a dagger the words pierce his soul, poisoning it to its very center. Hellish envy has done its deadly work. From that moment the soul of Saul could find no peace: he must have the blood of David!

METHODS OF ENVY

Detestable in its nature, envy is still more detestable in its methods. It can proceed with cool and calculating malice to such a degree that it likens its victims to the Prince of Darkness himself. It can judge with diabolic accuracy the means most likely to achieve its purpose. It can stoop to condescension and flattery when this is required; it will not hesitate to employ violence when this is deemed necessary. A striking illustration of these detestable methods is furnished us by the conduct of the Scribes and Pharisees towards our Divine Redeemer. They first denied that He was a prophet and sought to entrap Him in speech to prove Him an impostor; then they accused Him of Sabbath-breaking, consorting with sinners and blasphemy. When this failed they attributed the miracles, which they could not deny, to the power of the devil. But they come at length to violence, and as long as the world shall last, the Cross of Jesus Christ shall stand as a dire memorial of their envy. For the very judge who condemned Him saw through their plot—doctors though they were—and he confessed that it was from envy they betrayed Him.

CONCLUSION

My dear brethren, as we scan the pages of history and behold at every step the evidences of man's unbounded selfishness, the fruitful source of envy, we are tempted to despise the whole race of man. But there are exceptions—bright, shining exceptions—since the grace of God has not been vain. Holy Church holds up to us in the person of her Saints—Apostles, Martyrs, Confessors and Virgins—heroes of generosity, who have given up all, yea, even their lives, for their fellow men. Year after year she takes us back in spirit to the banks of the Jordan, where we behold a figure clad in the skins of wild beasts, but on whose brow there is reflected the glory of God. "Art thou Elias?" the people ask him. "I am not." "Art thou a prophet?" "He answers, No!" They are ready to proclaim thee the Promised Messias, O John! Say but the word and thy name

will ring from Bersabee to Dan. Was ever man before subjected to such a temptation? But John knew his mission. He was only the herald before the King; the dawn before the Sun of Justice. The moment has come when he must decrease as he had foretold. Does he hesitate? Does envy fill his noble heart? No, no; "Behold the Lamb of God," he cries out, "behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world."

Hail, then, O John, hail, bright example of generosity. Kings and princes have endeavored to perpetuate the fame of their achievements by monuments wrought in bronze and stone; but thy glory is enscribed on imperishable tablets. For as long as the Gospel be read in the Church of God, men will hear thy praises pronounced by the Lips of Truth Himself: "Amen I say to you, greater than John the Baptist has not been born of woman."

Envy

by the curé of ars

introduction

What a hateful and abominable thing envy is!

Every one who has not lost all feelings of morality considers envy as a most disgraceful vice, and yet this vice is not as rare as people think. There is no end to envy in the world. Even amongst ourselves, envy is not a stranger. Indeed, there is not a man upon earth who has not to be upon his guard to close his heart to the vice of envy, to keep down every emotion of envy within him. For this reason I wish to warn you to-day against envy, to show you, (1) *how disgraceful* and (2) *how injurious envy is.*

If we recognize how bad and pernicious a vice is, then we shall detest and avoid it.

envy is disgraceful

It is not a very difficult task to show the hideousness of envy. We have only to explain what envy is, to make its disgracefulness understood. What is envy? None other than a certain sadness

and trouble, a vexation and displeasure at the happiness and success of our fellow men, and a certain joy and satisfaction, pleasure and elation at the unhappiness and misfortune of others. To envy our neighbor means to grudge him his good fortune, and to wish him evil. In the Orient there is said to be a bird which stays in its nest sad and troubled when the weather is fine and the sun shines, but when it is stormy it flies gaily and joyfully about. This extraordinary bird is an image of envy. It resembles exactly those envious persons who in the same manner are sad when the sun of good fortune is shining on their fellow men, but on the contrary are joyful and delighted when the storm of misfortune breaks over them. Is anything further necessary to prove the hideousness of envy? Is it not a shame to be vexed at the well-being of our neighbor, at which we ought to be glad, and to feel pleased when misfortune overtakes our neighbor, when we should be sorry? Every vice is disgraceful; but none of them carry their disgrace so publicly on their forehead as the vice of envy. Other vices have even a pretext with which at least they can be apparently explained; but where will you find an excuse of envy?

The impure person may say he has been violently tempted, sensuality made him blind, the dangerous occasion caused him to fall; the thief may say that want and hunger misled him; the revengeful person may say that he was overcome by anger; but the envious person, what excuse can he or will he make? None; nothing but his disgraceful malice. Envy is pure malice, a true child of hell. Yes, envy is the devil's sin. If there are envious men, it is a sad proof that the devil has gained influence, power, and dominion over men, otherwise there would be no envy amongst them. When man came from the hand of God, he knew not what envy was. It is natural for man to rejoice with the joyful, and to be sad with the sorrowful. In the heart of man, as it was formed by God, there is to be found pity and charity, a brotherly interest in the weal or woe of his fellow creatures. If there are men who betray their human nature, and who rejoice at those things which cause good men to grieve, it is evident that these men are under the devil's influence, whose concern it is to pervert what God has ordained, and to ruin that which God has made.

I will even venture to say that the envious man is more malicious and behaves more disgracefully than the envious devil. Why is this? The envious man vents his poison on his own kind, and the devil does not do that. The devil burns with envy toward man. Human happiness distresses him, human misery delights him, but the other devils do not excite his envy. Yet men envy one another: envious men rage against their own flesh. Is not every man our brother, and does not our enemy belong as we do to the same family of God? How can the happiness of a brother vex a brother, or the unhappiness of the one be the delight of the other? I will show you envy from another point of view, from which it will appear no less disgraceful. Envy not only consists in a diabolical malice toward our fellow men, but it is also a heinous crime against God. To envy our neighbor's happiness means to murmur at the dispensations of Providence and at God's government of the world. The envious laborers in the vineyard, of whom the gospel speaks, murmured at the father of the family, and in like manner do all envious persons. Even if they do not grumble in just so many words, envy is practically a complaint against God. The envious person grudges his neighbor the good fortune that befalls him. But is it not God who has granted it to him? It is a subject of vexation to the envious that his neighbor's undertaking has succeeded, that his business is prosperous, that a joyful event has taken place. But does not every good gift come from God, who is the success of every enterprise, allows business to prosper, and brings about that joyful event? Envy, therefore, is a censure, a disapprobation of divine Providence. The eye of the envious one is evil, because God is good. According to this reasoning, God ought not to rule the world according to the decrees of His love and justice, but in accordance with the diabolical wishes of the envious, dispense His gifts and His chastisements. How malicious, and what a crime envy is! This vice, however, is not only shameful, but also injurious, not only malicious but also ruinous, as we shall discover in the second part.

ENVY IS INJURIOUS

The destructiveness of envy is even easier to demonstrate and to recognize than its baseness.

It is not without reason that we find envy amongst the seven deadly sins. It is the source of innumerable other sins. The evil is boundless which has its origin and root in envy. Envy is in reality the origin of every sin, because on account of the devil's envy sin came into the world. Holy Writ, the history of mankind, and daily experience prove that there is no vice which creates more evil, or produces more harm than envy.

What was the cause of the first murder that was committed? Did not the wicked Cain slay his brother Abel out of envy? Did not Jacob's sons sin against their brother Joseph out of envy? Was it not envy that caused the enraged Saul to hurl his spear at David? Was it not envy which caused Daniel's enemies to cast that great prophet into the lions' den? Did not the Pharisees and the elders conspire to put to death the Son of God; did they not crucify the divine Saviour from envy? How many crimes have occurred in the history of the world, all of which had their source in envy! Envy has occasioned divisions in the Church, produced heresies, originated wars, armed brother against brother, laid countries waste, pillaged cities, separated families, and brought them to ruin. Envy knows no bounds. It regards neither the bonds of friendship nor of blood. It incites the child against his father, as in the case of Absalom; brother against brother, like Cain; friend against friend, as with Saul; it causes men to forget the greatest benefaction, and to hate the kindest of benefactors, as was the case with the Pharisees toward our divine Saviour. Envy occasions a great host of sins; ingratitude toward God, even blasphemy; hatred and enmity toward mankind, very often a deadly hatred, an irreconcilable enmity; calumny, defamation of character, tale-bearing, desire of revenge, and of persecution: all these are the daughters of envy, verily a hellish crew, worthy of their hellish progenitor. It is hardly necessary to have recourse to Holy Scripture, or to history, to prove the disastrous effects of envy. It suffices to draw your

attention to daily experience, and to your immediate surroundings, where the havoc worked by envy is everywhere apparent. Ought not the evil fruits of envy to be a motive for us to strive to banish this devilish vice from our hearts? So as to encourage you still more in this resolution, I will show you, in conclusion, how injurious this vice of envy is for the envious man himself. Envy certainly causes a great deal of misery in the world, but it produces the greatest havoc in that man who fosters it, and who is controlled by it. No vice punishes itself so severely as envy does. For this reason the holy fathers called envy a just vice, not because it was just in itself, but because it is itself its own punishment; by its own torture it chastises itself, and in a way exercises justice upon itself. As the worm eats the wood, to which it owes its existence, so envy gnaws at the heart of the man who admits it. And when it has taken up its abode in our hearts, it soon shows itself in our outward bearing, for it takes the glow of health from the cheek of the envious, and reveals its presence in our interior, by sickly pale cheeks and hollow eyes. Envy gnaws at the heart as the rust does at the iron, it enfeebles the body like a lingering fever, tortures the soul, destroys the peace of our mind, and fills man with dejection and sadness, and banishes all peace and gladness from the soul.

"Soundness of heart is the life of the flesh; but envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Prov. xiv. 30). "Envy and anger shorten a man's days" (Ecclus. xxx. 26). The way in which envy is generally portrayed is very appropriate. It is represented as an old woman, bearing in her hands snakes and torches, with long sharp finger nails, pale of countenance and emaciated in body. Envy is represented as a woman, because it is a vice of a weak, unmanly, effeminate spirit; as an old woman, because it is as ancient as the world itself; with snakes and torches in the hands, because it stings and exudes poison like the snake, and kindles the torch of hatred and discord everywhere; with long sharp nails, because it preys upon itself and others; with a pale countenance and emaciated body, because it pines away through constant vexation and ill-humor; and finally the woman eats up her own heart, because

envious persons shorten their lives and hasten themselves to an early death. "Envy and anger shorten a man's days" (Ecclus. xxx. 26). Besides the torture which the envious prepare for themselves in this life, a still greater one awaits them in eternity. Perhaps you believe that the envious may be saved? St. Paul names envy amongst those works of the flesh which close the kingdom of heaven to us (Gal. v. 21). Let us not be surprised at this. Eternal blessedness is the reward of love, the hope and portion of those who love God and man. The envious person, however, loves neither God nor man. If he would work miracles, says St. John Chrysostom, or even if he preserved his chastity, or fasted, slept on the ground, and resembled the angels in their virtues, so long as he was polluted with envy, he would remain a lost man. It is utterly impossible for us to escape that fire which is prepared for the spirit of malice, if we do not liberate ourselves from this passion.

CONCLUSION

Spare yourselves, therefore, the torments of the envious in this world, and their chastisement in the next. Banish from your heart this shameful and destructive vice. Let charity reign amongst you, and do not envy one another any more. Rejoice with the joyful, and mourn with the sorrowful. Take a sincere interest in the weal or woe of your fellow man. Grant to every one the good which belongs to him, even to your enemy; and do not refuse your sympathy to any unfortunate person, not even to your enemy. And thus you will fulfill the law of the Lord: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" (Mark xii. 31). Let us beseech God to preserve us from the vice of envy, and to fill our hearts with His holy love. Amen.

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SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THIRD COMMANDMENT: REMEMBER THOU KEEP HOLY THE SABBATH DAY

TEXT

And Jesus answering, spoke to the lawyers and Pharisees saying: Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?—Luke xiv. 3.

Analysis

Introduction. The incident related in to-day's Gospel took place while our Lord was on His way from Galilee to Jerusalem for the last time, about three months before He suffered. The Pharisees had laid a plot to catch Him in fault, so that they could have something whereof to accuse Him before the people and justify their own hatred and persecution of Him. On a Sabbath day they prepared a supper to which Jesus was invited, and at which they had present a man afflicted with dropsy. As the Saviour was about to enter the supper room, He beheld the sick man who had been placed very conspicuously before Him. The Pharisees and lawyers, who held it was not lawful to heal on the Sabbath day, watched to see what our Lord would do. He first cured the sick man, and then proved to His hypocritical observers that their own ideas of the observance of the Sabbath were both erroneous and inconsistent.

There are many Pharisees in our own day who likewise think that the Sabbath is to be kept with an external rigor and outward observance as severe as that of those ancient hypocrites, and who at the same time are just as far removed from true charity and the spirit of the Gospel of Christ as were those

others. Let us therefore see what this Commandment requires of us, and what it forbids.

I. **What the Third Commandment requires.** 1. The natural law requires that man should at some special times devote himself to the worship of His Creator. Just when this should be is left to the positive law to determine. 2. The Commandment given by God to Moses on Mt. Sinai designated the seventh day in the week as the Lord's day, since it was on that day that God rested from the work of creation and delivered the Jews from the bondage of Pharao. Besides the Sabbath the Jews also had many festival days, such as the Pasch, Pentecost, Tabernacles, etc., on which the special divine benefits to their race were commemorated. 3. The Church, from the very times of the Apostles substituted Sunday for Saturday as the Lord's day, because it was on the first day of the week that our Lord rose from the dead and the Holy Ghost came down upon the Apostles. In addition the Church has appointed various Holydays, *i.e.*, days of special observance, in commemoration of the chief mysteries of our religion. 4. To keep holy the Lord's day means to sanctify it by religious exercises and devout practices. The chief means of keeping Sunday holy is to hear Mass, *i.e.*, to assist devoutly at the unbloody sacrifice of the Body and Blood of Christ, which all who have reached the use of reason are obliged to do, unless legitimately excused. Other good works by which the Sunday is sanctified are : (a) attendance at Sunday school, sermons, and devotions, such as vespers and benediction; (b) going to confession and Communion; (c) special prayers and works of charity. 5. Excuses from the observance of Sunday are physical or moral impossibility.

II. **What the Third Commandment forbids.** 1. This precept prohibits in the first place servile works, *i.e.*, works in which the body is more engaged than the mind, such as digging, sewing, and the like, as well as such distracting occupations as trading, buying, selling, and the like. To engage in these occupations without necessity for a considerable length of time, say two hours, on

Sunday is gravely to violate the third precept. 2. Reasons that permit of servile work on Sunday are: (a) necessity of our position in life; (b) works of charity, such as helping the sick, as our Lord did, as stated in to-day's Gospel; (c) works of piety, such as decorating the Church, playing the organ, etc. 3. Innocent pleasure and recreation are not forbidden on Sunday, provided they do not interfere with the religious duties of the day. Dangerous diversions and kinds and places of amusements, however, are especially out of order on Sunday.

Exhortation. 1. We should sanctify the Lord's day, as far as possible, in the ways explained above. 2. We should avoid, on the one hand, a heathen idea of Sunday which would make it a day of revelry and licentiousness, and on the other hand, the rigorism of the Pharisees who forbade the most necessary works of charity on the Sabbath day. 3. So important is this Commandment that it begins with the imperative, *Remember*. If people observe this precept, they are likely to observe the others; but if they neglect it, the others will also most likely be more or less neglected.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Third Commandment

Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor and do all thy works; but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it, neither thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, and the sea, and all things that are in them, and rested on the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it.[1]

What this Commandment Prescribes

This Commandment of the Law rightly and in due order prescribes the external worship which we owe to God and which is, as it were, a consequence of the preceding Commandment. For if we sincerely and devoutly yield internal worship to God, guided by

[1] Exod. xx. 8.

the faith and hope we have in Him, we cannot but honor Him with external worship and thanksgiving.[2] Now since we cannot easily discharge these duties whilst occupied in worldly affairs, a certain fixed time has been set aside so that it may be conveniently performed.

IMPORTANCE OF ITS EXPOSITION AND OBSERVANCE

The observance of this Commandment is attended with much fruit and advantage. Hence it is of the highest importance that the pastor use the utmost diligence in its exposition. The word "Remember," with which the Commandment commences, must animate him to the zealous performance of this duty; for if the faithful are commanded to "remember" this Commandment, it becomes the duty of the pastor to recall it frequently to their minds in exhortation and instruction.

The importance of its observance may be inferred from the consideration, that those who faithfully comply with its injunctions are more easily induced to keep all the other Commandments. For among the other works of piety by which the Sabbath is to be sanctified, the faithful are bound to assemble in the church to hear the word of God. When they have thus learned the justifications of the Lord, they will be disposed to observe with their whole hearts His holy Law. Hence the sanctification of the Sabbath is very often commanded in Scripture, as may be seen in Exodus,[3] Leviticus,[4] Deuteronomy,[5] and in the prophecies of Isaias,[6] Jeremias,[7] and Ezechiel,[8] all of which contain this precept which commands the observance of the Sabbath.[9] Rulers and magistrates should be admonished and exhorted to lend the sanction and support of their authority to the pastors of the Church, particularly in

[2] See C. of Trent, decret. de ciborum delectu et festis diebus, last session, towards the end; St. Thomas, IIa. IIae., q. 122. art. 4; de consecrat. dist. 3. in many chapters.

[3] Exod. xvi. 20, 31.

[4] Lev. xvi. 19, 23, 26.

[5] Deut. v.

[6] Isa. lvi. 58, 66.

[7] Jerem. 17.

[8] Ezech. xx. 22, 23, 46.

[9] On preaching the word of God see C. of Trent, sess. 5. c. 2; the admirable work of St. Charles Borrom. in the Acts of the Church of Milan; see also the Acts of the Church of Bologna.

upholding and extending the worship of God, and in commanding obedience to the spiritual injunctions of the pastor.

How the Third Differs from the Other Commandments

With regard to the exposition of this Commandment, the faithful are carefully to be taught how it agrees with and how it differs from the others, in order that they may understand why Christians observe not Saturday but Sunday.

The point of difference is evident. The other Commandments of the Decalogue are precepts of the natural law, obligatory at all times and unalterable. Hence after the abrogation of the Law of Moses, all the Commandments contained in the two tables are observed by Christians, not indeed because their observance is commanded by Moses, but because they accord with the law of nature whose dictates men are obliged to obey.

The Third Commandment, on the other hand, considered as to the time appointed for its fulfilment, is not fixed and unalterable, but susceptible of change, and belongs not to the moral but ceremonial Law. Neither is it a principle of the natural law; we are not instructed by nature to give external worship to God on that day, rather than on any other. And in fact the Sabbath was kept holy only from the time of the liberation of the people of Israel from the bondage of Pharao. The obligation was to cease with the abrogation of the Jewish worship, of which it formed a part; and it therefore was no longer obligatory after the death of Christ. Having been, as it were, images which shadowed the light and the truth, these ceremonies were to disappear at the coming of that light and truth, which is Christ Jesus. Hence St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Galatians, when reproving the observers of the Mosaic rites, says: "You observe days and months and times and years; I am afraid of you lest perhaps I have labored in vain amongst you";[10] and he writes to the same effect in his Epistle to the Colossians.[11] On the difference between this and the other Commandments these observations will suffice.

[10] Galat. iv. 10.
[11] Col. ii. 16.

HOW THE THIRD IS LIKE THE OTHER COMMANDMENTS

This Commandment is like the others, not in so far as it is a precept of the ceremonial law, but only as it is a natural and moral precept. The worship of God and the practice of religion, which it comprises, have the natural law for their basis. The unbidden impulse of nature prompts us to give some time to the worship of God; and this is a truth demonstrated by the unanimous consent of all nations, who, accordingly, consecrated public festivals to the solemnities of religion and divine worship. As nature requires some time to be given to necessary functions of the body, to sleep, repose and the like, so she also requires, that some time be devoted to the mind, to refresh and invigorate its energies by heavenly contemplation. Hence, since some time should be devoted to the worship of the Deity and to the practice of religion, this Commandment doubtless forms part of the moral law.

THE JEWISH SABBATH CHANGED TO SUNDAY BY THE APOSTLES

The Apostles therefore resolved to consecrate the first day of the week to the divine worship, and called it "the Lord's day." St. John in his Apocalypse makes mention of "the Lord's day";[12] and the Apostle commands collections to be made "on the first day of the week,"[13] that is, according to the interpretation of St. Chrysostom, on the Lord's day. From all this we learn that even then the Lord's day was kept holy in the Church.

THE FIRST PART OF THIS COMMANDMENT EXPLAINED

In order that the faithful may know what they are to do and what to avoid on the Lord's day, it will not be found foreign to his purpose, if the pastor, dividing the Commandment into four parts, explain each word of it carefully.

[12] Apoc. i. 10.

[13] Chrysost., hom. 13. in Corinth; Amb.; Theophylact.; Can. Apost. c. 67; Ignat., Epist. ad Magnes.; Just. apol. 2; Tertul., in apol. c. 16; de Coron. milit. c. 3; de idol. c. 14; Cyp., epist. 33; Clement. Alex., lib. 5. Strom. well before the end; Orig. hom. in Exod.

MEANING OF THE WORD "REMEMBER"

In the first place, then, he will explain generally the meaning of these words: "Remember that thou keep holy the sabbath day." The word "remember" is appropriately made use of at the beginning of the Commandment to signify that the sanctification of that particular day belonged to the ceremonial law. Of this it would seem to have been necessary to remind the people, for, although the law of nature commands us to give religious worship to God, it fixes no particular day for the performance of that duty.

They are also to be taught, that from these words we may learn how we should employ our time during the week; that we are to keep constantly in view the Lord's day, on which we are, as it were, to render an account to God for our occupations and conduct, and that therefore our works should be such as not to be unacceptable in the sight of God, or, as it is written, be to us "an occasion of grief, and a scruple of heart." [14]

Finally, we are taught, and the instruction demands our serious attention, that there are but too many circumstances which may lead to a forgetfulness of this Commandment, such as the evil example of others who neglect its observance, and an inordinate love of amusements and sports, which frequently withdraw from the holy and religious observance of the Lord's day.

MEANING OF THE WORD "SABBATH"

We now come to the meaning of the word "Sabbath." Sabbath is a Hebrew word which signifies cessation. To keep the Sabbath, therefore, means to cease from labor and to rest. In this sense the seventh day was called the "Sabbath," because God, having finished the creation of the world, rested on that day from all the work which He had done.[15] By this name the Lord calls it in Exodus.

Later on, not only the seventh day, but, in honor of that day, the entire week was called "the Sabbath"; and in this

[14] 1 Kings. xxv. 31.
[15] Gen. ii. 3. Exod. xx. 21. Deut. v. 12.

meaning of the word, the Pharisee says in St. Luke: "I fast twice in a Sabbath." [16] So much will suffice with regard to the signification of the word "Sabbath."

MEANING OF KEEPING THE SABBATH

In the Scriptures keeping holy the Sabbath means a cessation from bodily labor and worldly business, as is clear from the following words of the Commandment: "Thou shalt do no work on it." This alone, however, does not comprise the meaning of the Commandment, otherwise, it would have been sufficient to say in Deuteronomy, "observe the day of the Sabbath"; [17] but it is added, "and sanctify it"; and these additional words prove that the Sabbath is a day sacred to religion, set apart for works of piety and exercises of devotion.

We sanctify the Sabbath fully and perfectly, therefore, when we consecrate it to God by duties of piety and religion. This is evidently the Sabbath, which Isaias calls "delightful"; [18] for when thus spent, it is the delight of God and of His faithful servants. And if to this religious and holy observance of the Sabbath we add works of mercy, the rewards proposed to our piety in the same chapter are numerous and most important.[19]

The true and proper meaning, therefore, of this Commandment tends to this, that we take special care to set apart some fixed time, when, disengaged from bodily labor, and undisturbed by worldly cares, we may devote our whole being, soul and body, to the religious veneration of God.

SECOND PART OF THE COMMANDMENT

The second part of the precept declares that the seventh day was consecrated by Almighty God to His worship: "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy works; but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." From these words we learn that the Sabbath is consecrated to the Lord, that we are

[16] Luke xviii. 12.
[17] Deut. v. 12.
[18] Isa. lviii. 13.
[19] Isa. lviii. 6.

required on that day to render Him the duties of religion, and to know that the seventh day is a sign of His rest.

WHY THE SEVENTH DAY WAS CHOSEN FOR DIVINE WORSHIP

This particular day was fixed for the worship of God, because it would not have been well to leave to a rude people the choice of a time of worship, lest, perhaps, they might have been led to imitate the festivals of the Egyptians.

MYSTIC SIGNIFICATIONS OF THE SABBATH

The last day of the week was, therefore, chosen for the worship of God, and in its choice there is much that is symbolic. Hence in Exodus,[20] and in Ezechiel [21] the Lord calls it "a sign": "See that you keep my Sabbath because it is a sign between me and you in your generation, that you may know that I am the Lord who sanctify you." [22]

It was a sign that man should dedicate and sanctify himself to God, since even the very day is dedicated to Him. For the holiness of the day consists in this, that on it men are bound in a special manner to practice holiness and religion.

It was also a sign, and, as it were, a memorial, of the stupendous work of the creation. Furthermore to the Jews it was a traditional sign, reminding them that they had been delivered by the hand of God from the galling yoke of Egyptian bondage. This the Almighty Himself declares in these words: "Remember that thou also didst serve in Egypt, and the Lord thy God brought thee out from thence with a strong hand and a stretched out arm. Therefore hath he commanded thee that thou shouldst observe the Sabbath day." [23]

It is also a sign of a spiritual and celestial Sabbath. The spiritual Sabbath consists in a holy and mystical rest, wherein the old man being buried with Christ, the soul is renewed to life, and carefully applies itself to act in accordance with the spirit of Christian piety. For those who were once darkness

[20] Exod. xxxi. 13.
[21] Ezech. xx. 12.
[22] Deut. v. 15.
[23] Deut. v. 15.

but are now light in the Lord, should walk as children of the light, in all goodness, and justice and truth, having no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness.[24]

THE CELESTIAL SABBATH: ITS MEANING

The celestial Sabbath, as St. Cyril observes on these words of the Apostle, "There remaineth therefore a day of rest for the people of God,"[25] is that life which we shall enjoy with Christ, in the fruition of all good, when sin shall be no more, according to these words of Isaias: "No lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it, nor be found there; but a path and a way shall be there, and it shall be called the holy way";[26] for in the vision of God the souls of the saints obtain every good. The pastor therefore will exhort and animate the faithful in the words of the Apostle: "Let us hasten therefore to enter into that rest."[27]

OTHER FESTIVALS OBSERVED BY THE JEWS

Besides the seventh day, the Jews observed other festivals[28] which were instituted by the divine law, and the end and aim of which was to awaken in the people the recollection of the principal favors conferred on them by the Almighty.

THE SABBATH, WHY CHANGED TO SUNDAY

But the Church of God has in her wisdom ordained that the celebration of the Sabbath should be transferred to Sunday.

For, as on that day light first shone on the world, so by the resurrection of our Lord on the same day, by whom was thrown open to us the gate to eternal life, we were called out of darkness into light; and hence the Apostle would have it called "the Lord's day."

[24] Eph. v. 8.
[25] Heb. iv. 9.
[26] Isa. xxxv. 9.
[27] Heb. iv. 11.
[28] Concerning these festivals see Leviticus xxiii., Numbers xxix., Deut. vi. For their meaning see Cyril, de adoratione in spiritu et veritate, 1. 17; St. Thomas, Ia. IIae., q. 102, art. 4. ad 10.

We also learn from the Sacred Scriptures that the first day of the week was held sacred for other reasons; for on that day the work of the creation commenced, and on that day the Holy Ghost descended upon the Apostles.

WHY OTHER FESTIVALS WERE INSTITUTED

From the very infancy of the Church and in the following centuries other days were also appointed by the Apostles and the holy Fathers to be kept sacred, in order to commemorate piously and devoutly the special gifts bestowed on us Christians. Among these days the most conspicuous are those which were instituted to honor the mysteries of our redemption. In the next place are the days which are dedicated to the most blessed Virgin Mother, to the Apostles, Martyrs and other Saints who reign with Christ. In the celebration of their victories the divine power and goodness are praised, due honor is paid to their memories, and the faithful are encouraged to the imitation of their virtues.

SLOTH AND INDOLENCE CONDEMNED

And as the observance of the precept is very strongly assisted by these words: "Six days shalt thou labor, but on the seventh day is the Sabbath of God," the pastor should therefore carefully explain them to the people. They implicitly admonish him that the faithful are to be exhorted not to waste their lives in indolence and sloth, but that each one, mindful of the words of the Apostle, should "do his own business, and work with his own hands, as he had commanded them."[29]

These words also enjoin as a duty commanded by God that "in six days we do all our works," and admonish us not to defer to a festival what should have been done during the other days of the week, thereby distracting the attention from the things of God.

WHAT THE THIRD PART OF THE COMMANDMENT PROHIBITS

The third part of the Commandment comes next to be explained. It points out, to a certain extent, the manner in which

[29] 1 Thess. iv. 11.

we are to keep holy the Sabbath day, and explains particularly what we are forbidden to do on that day. "Thou shalt do no work on it," says the Lord, "thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates."

These words teach us, in the first place, to avoid whatever may interfere with the worship of God on the Sabbath day. Hence it is not difficult to perceive that all servile works are forbidden, not because they are improper or evil in themselves, but because they withdraw from the worship of God, which is the great end of the Commandment. The faithful should be still more careful not to profane the Sabbath by sin, which not only withdraws the mind from the contemplation of divine things, but entirely alienates us from the love of God.[30]

WHAT IT PERMITS

But whatever regards the celebration of divine worship, such as the decoration of the altar or church on occasion of some festival, and the like, although servile works, are not prohibited; and hence our Lord Himself says: "The priests in the temple brake the Sabbath, and are without blame." [31]

Neither are we to suppose that this Commandment forbids attention to those things on the Sabbath, which if neglected on that day will be lost. Their preservation is no violation of the Commandment, and is expressly permitted by the sacred canons. There are many other things which our Lord declares lawful on festivals and which may be seen by the pastor in St. Matthew and St. John.

WHY ANIMALS ARE NOT TO BE EMPLOYED ON THE SABBATH

To omit nothing that may interfere with the sanctification of the Sabbath, the Commandment mentions beasts of burden, because their use will prevent its due observance. If beasts be employed on the Sabbath, human labor also becomes neces-

[30] See Aug., tract. 3 in Joan.; in Ps. xxxi. serm. 1; lib. de decem chordis c. 3.
[31] Matt. xii. 5.

sary; for they do not labor alone, but assist the labors of man. Now it is not lawful for man to work on that day. Hence it is not lawful for the animals to work which man uses.

But the Commandment has also another purpose. For if God commands the exemption of cattle from labor on the Sabbath, still more imperative is the obligation to avoid all acts of inhumanity towards servants, or others whose labor and industry we employ in our service.

HOW SUNDAYS AND HOLYDAYS ARE TO BE SANCTIFIED

The pastor should also not omit to inform the faithful how in work and action they are to sanctify festival days. These means are: to go to church, and there, with heartfelt piety and devotion, to assist at the celebration of the holy Sacrifice of the Mass;[32] to approach frequently the Sacraments of the Church, instituted for our salvation, to heal our spiritual maladies.[33]

Nothing can be more seasonable or salutary than frequent recourse to the tribunal of penance; and to this the pastor will be enabled to exhort the faithful by using the instructions and proofs which have been explained in their own place on the Sacrament of Penance.

But not only will he urge his people to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance—he will also zealously exhort them again and again, to approach frequently the holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.

On festival days the faithful should also listen with attention and reverence to sermons; nothing is more intolerable, nothing more unworthy of a Christian than to despise the words of Christ, or hear them with indifference.[34] The faithful should also give themselves to frequent prayer and the praises of God; and an object of our special attention should be to learn those things which pertain to a Christian life, and to practice with care the duties of Christian piety, viz., giving alms to the

[32] C. of Agath. c. 47; C. of Orleans, c. 8; C. of Trib. c. 35; de cons. dist. 1. cap. Missas; cum ad celebrandas; omnes fideles.

[33] Aug., de Eccl. dogm. c. 53; quoted in de cons. dist. 2. c. quotidien.

[34] Justin., Apol. 2; Act. xx. 7; Aug., lib. 50. hom. 26; quoted 1. q. lib. cap. interroga.

poor, visiting the sick, administering consolation to the afflicted and the suffering. "Religion clean and undefiled before God and the Father is this," says St. James, "to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation." [35]

From what has been said it is easy to perceive how this Commandment may be violated.

THE FOURTH PART OF THIS COMMANDMENT: MOTIVES FOR ITS OBSERVANCE

It is also a duty of the pastor to have ready at hand certain main arguments by which he may especially impress on the minds of the faithful the conviction that this Commandment is to be observed with pious zeal and the greatest exactitude.

I. A DUTY WE OWE TO GOD

To the attainment of this end it will materially conduce, if he make them understand and see clearly, how just and reasonable it is to devote certain days exclusively to the worship of God in order to acknowledge, adore, and venerate Him from whom we have received such innumerable and inestimable blessings. Had God commanded us to offer Him on each day of our lives the tribute of religious worship, would it not be our duty, in return for the inestimable and infinite benefits which His bounty has showered on us, to endeavor to obey the command with promptitude and alacrity? But now that the days specially consecrated to His worship are but few there is no excuse for neglecting this duty, which moreover obliges under grave sin.[36]

2. THE OBSERVANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT BRINGS MANY BLESSINGS.

The pastor will next point out the importance of a faithful compliance with this precept. Those who are faithful in its observ-

[35] James i. 27. This was the practice of the early Christians, as we learn from Just., Apol. 2; Tertull. in Apol.; in lib. ad martyres; in lib. 2. ad uxorem, near the end.

[36] See de consecr. dist. 1; in decret. Titul. de feriis; C. of Macon II, cc. 1, 7; C. of Tribur. c. 35; Ignat., in ep ad Philip.; Leo, serm. 3. de quadrag.; Aug., serm. 251. de temp.

ance are admitted, as it were, into the divine presence to speak freely with God; for in prayer we contemplate the divine majesty, and commune with Him; in hearing religious instruction, we hear the voice of God, which reaches us through that of his pious and zealous minister; and at the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, we adore Christ the Lord, present on our altars. Such are the blessings enjoyed by those who faithfully observe the Third Commandment.

3. THE NEGLECT OF THIS COMMANDMENT IS A GREAT CRIME.

But those, who altogether neglect its fulfilment resist God and His Church, they heed not God's command, and are enemies of His holy laws, of which the easiness of the command is itself a proof. We should, it is true, be prepared to undergo the severest labor for the sake of God; but in this Commandment He imposes on us no labor; He only commands us to rest and disengage ourselves from worldly cares on those days which are to be kept holy. To refuse obedience to this Commandment is, therefore, a proof of extreme boldness; and the punishments with which its infraction has been visited, as we learn from the Book of Numbers,[37] should be a salutary admonition to Christians.

In order, therefore, to avoid offending God in this way, we should frequently ponder this word: "Remember," and should place before our minds the important advantages and blessings which, as we have already seen, flow from the religious observance of holydays, and also numerous other considerations of the same tendency, which the good and zealous pastor will develop at length to his people as circumstances may require.

Sermons

The Lord's Day.

BY THE REV. CHARLES BRUEHL, D.D.

Observe the day of the sabbath, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee.—Deut. v. 12.

INTRODUCTION

My friends: The proper observance of the Lord's Day is of the utmost importance for the religious life of the faithful. In

[37] Num. xv. 32. et seq.

fact, the religious fervor of anyone may be readily gauged by the manner in which he celebrates the feasts of the Church. Neglect of the days and seasons, sacred to the Lord, bespeaks a spirit of worldliness and an alarming indifference to the things that pertain to God and eternity. No one can claim to be a good and practical Catholic who does not sanctify the Lord's Day in the way which God and the Church have prescribed. Pious observance of the Lord's Day is the surest and easiest test of religious sincerity. It is for this reason, that God in the Old Testament insists so often and so earnestly on this very point. But Christ, who came not to abolish but to fulfill the law, has changed nothing with regard to this matter. Hence, the obligation of sanctifying the Lord's Day is as solemn and grave now as it was in the days of the Prophets, who denounced in such thundering accents all violations of the sabbath. Thus we read: "What is this evil thing that you are doing, profaning the sabbath day? Did not our fathers do these things and our God brought all this evil upon us, and upon this city? And you bring more wrath upon Israel by violating the sabbath" (Neh. xiii. 17, 18). Today's Gospel affords us an excellent opportunity to discourse on the Lord's day and on our duties in its regard.

ABSTENTION FROM SERVILE WORK

Manifestly, the Lord intended His day to be a boon and a blessing to all that toil for their daily dole of bread. It was to be an oasis of rest and sweet repose in a world of weariness and grinding drudgery. He enjoins, therefore, the cessation of all servile labor on this privileged day: "Six days shalt thou labour, and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates" (Ex. xx. 9, 10). God does not encourage idleness, but He knows that there is a limit to man's endurance. Rest is essential to health and the proper development of man. Profound wisdom and humaneness have prompted the law of the Sabbath rest.

The prizes of this world have such an attraction that many would bring on themselves and others physical and moral ruin in the pursuit of them, if there were not a law to check and curb their headlong rush. Greed is a merciless taskmaster; hence, the Lord, in order to protect ourselves and others, dependent on our will, from the evil consequences of an insatiable desire for wealth, has established this day of rest. Through it thousands and millions have been saved from bodily ruin and moral degradation. Like a ray of sunshine, it came into the dreary life of the slave and the laborer, taking, at least for a short space of time, the heavy burdens from their weary shoulders.

Severe penalties follow on the infractions of the Sabbath rest. Ill fortune dogs the footsteps of those who, habitually, ply their trade and carry on their business on Sundays and holydays. Industries that disregard the law of the Sunday rest degrade men and cause social unrest and discontent. No one need expect prosperity as the result of Sunday work. This is well illustrated in the following incident: A skipper on one of our inland lakes weighed anchor at an early hour on a Sunday morning, thus preventing his crew from attending Holy Mass. At the remonstrances of his friends he laughed, saying that this way he could gain much time as the wind was very favorable. But the Lord crossed his plans. Through some blunder, he ran aground and on account of this delay lost much more time than he gained by his Sunday work. Thus the Lord baffles the evil designs of those who profane His Sundays for the sake of material gain. Let greed, then, not tempt us to convert the day of rest established by the Lord into a day of servility and groveling work.

SANCTIFICATION OF THE SUNDAY ESSENTIAL

Sunday is a day of rest. As such it is an institution fraught with great blessings to mankind. But it has still a much higher purpose. It is a sacred day, set aside in a special manner for the service of God. This noble and lofty end lifts it above all other days and makes it great and glorious. "Ob-

serve," says the Bible, "the day of the sabbath, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. v. 12). To sanctify, in scriptural language, means to reserve and appoint something to a holy and religious use. The sanctification of the Sunday, then, implies that it be spent in a religious and pious fashion. Abstention from servile work is commanded in order that we may be free and have leisure for the things of God and the soul.

The engrossing duties of the week leave us little time to look after the important business of saving our soul. That the vital affairs of eternity may not be neglected, God has instituted the Sunday. On this day earthly cares should not occupy our minds. Everything else should be dismissed from our thought except the one thing necessary. During the precious hours of Sunday we must devote ourselves to religious practices and to pious considerations, thus keeping alive in our hearts the flame of faith and stirring up God's grace within us. A man who gives neither time nor thought to his business will not prosper; nor will any one prosper in the business of salvation who does not consecrate his Sundays to this all-important matter. Our salvation will to a very large extent depend on the way in which we have observed the holy day of the Lord.

Sunday is indispensable for the interests of religion. Even as the plant requires the refreshing dew, if it is not to wither away; even as the fire needs fuel, if it is not to be extinguished; even as the glowing coal must have the breath of air, if it is not to grow cold and dead; even thus religion cannot flourish and thrive without the Sunday. Without the elevation of the soul which takes place on Sunday, the mind would be weighed down and crushed under the burden of earthly cares and the spiritual sense would be blunted. The religious service of the Sunday fans into bright flame the smoldering sparks of religion, choked with the ashes of worldly preoccupations. On this day we gain a vision of higher things which sustains us during the week and does not allow us to sink into worldliness. The ringing bells of Sunday are like voices from the other world, calling us from the distracting turmoil

of this earth and making real to us the things of God. Religion and Sunday observances are intimately united, nor does religious practice long survive the neglect of Sunday. In those families and countries in which the holiness of the Lord's Day is no longer recognized, religion begins to decline. But where the Sunday is sanctified, religion rests on a solid and safe foundation; it is as a tree planted near a river and as a flower, the roots of which draw life from a rich soil. On his first visit to the Penobscot Indians, Bishop Cheverus found that these good Indians still celebrated the Sunday by reciting prayers and singing the hymns they had learned from the Missionary Fathers. And though they had been without a priest for many years, they yet had kept the faith. No one can doubt that it was through the faithful observance of the day of the Lord that they had been enabled to persevere in faith and in the grace of God under such trying circumstances. If the sanctification of the Lord's Day is of such momentous consequence for our religious life it should be of great concern to us to learn how we can celebrate Sunday in the most appropriate and profitable way. To this question we will now turn our attention.

SUNDAY SANCTIFIED BY WORKS OF PIETY AND CHARITY

There are two kinds of good works, which, in a very particular manner, are suitable for the day of the Lord: works of piety and works of charity. Of the former not much need be said, since it goes without saying that prayer, pious reading and attending religious services are most befitting the character of the Lord's day. If Sunday is the day of the Lord, then certainly there is no better way of spending it than in the house of the Lord, the church. It is of obligation that we attend the holy Sacrifice of the Mass; but outside of that we should try to be present at the devotions held in the church and make personal visits of our own to the Lord in the tabernacle. If we make Sunday a day of prayer and of churchgoing, we are sure that we are keeping it in a way most pleasing to God and most salutary for our soul.

That works of charity and mercy harmonize well with the exalted character of Sunday, appears clearly from to-day's Gospel. In spite of the sullen and unreasonable opposition of the Pharisees, the Lord works a miracle on the Sabbath. He instructs the ignorant, which is one of the spiritual works of mercy, and He heals the sick, which is one of the corporal works of mercy. His example we may safely follow. Moreover, the Saints made Sunday a day of mercy, to be distinguished by deeds of charity and acts of kindness. Charity sanctifies and adorns the day of the Lord. Works of mercy grace and beautify the Sunday, as flowers and candles adorn our altars. If we embroider the Sunday with golden acts of benevolence, it will make a pattern that delights the eye of God. Next to praying, performing errands of mercy is the best thing we could possibly do on a Sunday.

Accordingly, if Sunday seems to some a long and dull day, it is their own fault. Let them fill the blessed hours with prayer, devout reading and charitable practices, and the hours will not hang heavily on their hands. Let them visit the bedridden and cheer their painful solitude. Let them enter the homes of the poor and destitute and relieve their poverty. Let them encourage the disheartened and the broken in spirit. Spent in this fashion, Sunday will prove to be a happy day, rich in grace and overflowing with the choicest blessings of heaven.

CONCLUSION

My friends: There may be slight danger in our country that the day of the Lord be desecrated by servile work, but there is great danger that it degenerate into a day of idleness and pleasure. Legitimate recreation and innocent pleasure are not to be excluded; but the religious nature of Sunday must not be lost sight of. Without adopting the narrow views of the Pharisees, let us keep in mind that Sunday is for God and our soul. Free from the pressure of earthly occupations, let us commune with God and lift our souls to the contemplation of eternal truths. Such devout and truly Christian

observance of Sunday here on earth will prepare us for the blissful enjoyment of that eternal Sunday in Heaven, which knows no shadow and no diminution and no end.

Sunday Observance

BY THE REV. THOMAS P. PHELAN, LL.D.

Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath day?—Luke xiv. 3.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

In the Third Commandment of the Decalogue, God admonishes His chosen people: "Remember thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labor and shalt do all thy works. But on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work on it. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth . . . and rested on the seventh day; therefore the Lord blessed the seventh day and sanctified it" (Exod. xx. 8-11). The Church of Christ, in the name and by the authority of her divine Founder, teaches her children in her first precept their duties on the Lord's day: "To keep Sundays and holy days of obligation holy by hearing Mass and resting from servile works." In the heart of man, engraved by the finger of God, is the divine, natural law binding and leading him to worship constantly, regularly and religiously the God who made him, who preserves him, who will reward him.

SABBATH OBSERVANCE IN THE OLD LAW

The Jews observed the sabbath day strictly and solemnly. "Observe the day of the sabbath, to sanctify it, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee" (Deut. v. 12). All labor was suspended, all business discontinued. The heavenly manna was not sent on the Lord's day. "Gather it six days; but on the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, therefore, it shall not be found" (Exod. xvi. 26). Desecration of the feast was an offense, punishable by death. The man who gathered sticks

in the wilderness was imprisoned by Moses and Aaron and condemned by God: "Let that man die, let all the multitude stone him without the camp" (Num. xv. 32-36). The sacrilegious Nicanor mocked and despised the holocausts of the Lord and swore to burn His house. The arms of Judas avenged the insult and the tyrant and his army perished (1 Mach. vi. 26-43). The arrogant and barbarous Antiochus defiled the Temple, profaned its altars, "and neither were the sabbaths kept nor the solemn days of the fathers observed" (Mach. vi. 6). The haughty monarch was afflicted with a loathsome malady and died in agony and despair.

OUR LORD'S TEACHING

The Pharisees corrupted the divine commands by introducing tyrannous and puerile observances. Christ healed an infirm man at the pool of Bethsaida. "Arise, take up thy bed and walk" (John v. 8). The Jews murmured saying: "It is the sabbath; it is not lawful for thee to take up thy bed." But Jesus rebuked them: "My Father worketh until now: and I work" (John v. 1–17). The Apostles plucked and ate the corn as they walked through the fields. Immediately the Pharisees protested "Behold thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do on the sabbath day." The Saviour reminded them that David had eaten of the loaves of proposition and that the priests break the law and are without blame. "For the Son of Man is Lord even of the sabbath" (Matt. xii. 1-8). "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark ii. 27). The cripple with the withered hand was cured in the synagogue. Jesus knew the evil thoughts of His audience: "I ask you if it be lawful on the sabbath day to do good or to do evil; to save life or to destroy" (Luke vi. 6-9). The unwarranted interpretation was the work of corrupt and sinful men and not the command of God. The Giver of the law was all charity, all justice, all mercy. "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit and will not immediately draw him out on the sabbath day?" (Luke xiv. 5). "What man shall there be among you, that hath a sheep: and

if the same fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not take hold on it and lift it up? How much better is a man than a sheep? Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the sabbath day" (Matt. xii. 11-12).

SUNDAY SUBSTITUTED FOR SATURDAY

Under the Jewish dispensation the seventh day was consecrated to God. With the establishment of the Church of Christ the first day of the week was substituted as the Lord's day. The Saviour rose from the dead on Easter Sunday, and the grace and truth of the new law are the fruits of His triumphal resurrection. The Holy Spirit descended on the Apostles on Pentecost Sunday and sent them forth to establish the religion of God. Paul, coming to Philippi, gathered his converts together on Sunday. "And on the first day of the week, when we were assembled to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, being to depart on the morrow" (Acts xx. 7). Under the direction of the same Apostle, collections for the brethren at Jerusalem were taken up in the church of Galatia. "On the first day of the week let every one of you put apart with himself, laying up what it shall well please him: that when I come the collections be not then to be made" (1 Cor. xvi. 2). The Apostles, armed with the authority of Christ, inspired by the Holy Spirit, designated Sunday as the Lord's day, and their successors throughout the centuries have loyally observed and obeyed their infallible teachings.

SANCTIFICATION OF SUNDAY

God commanded His chosen people to keep holy the Sabbath day. His Church frames laws and regulations for the proper observance of the Sunday. Every Christian must attend Mass under pain of mortal sin, unless lawfully excused by some grave and legitimate cause. Fathers and mothers must send their children, masters and mistresses must give their servants every opportunity of fulfilling this obligation. The Mass is the august sacrifice of the New Law, the clean oblation of the Body and Blood of the Lamb, applying the merits of the Pas-

sion and Death to the souls of men. In obedience to the Third Commandment and under the guidance of her Divine Founder, the Church proclaims that attendance at Mass is obligatory and essential for the proper observance of the Sunday. In addition, the Christian is urged to attend Vespers and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, to read pious and inspiring books, and to instruct the ignorant and the young in the truths of religion.

SERVILE WORK

"Thou shalt do no work on it" (Exod. xx. 10). All labor of a servile nature, whether for personal profit or friendly aid, is forbidden. Only in case of serious need may a man toil on forbidden days. However, when necessity or custom, charity or mercy, require his help, he may freely and safely perform the allotted tasks. Especially when so many utilities are in daily operation, the Christian is obliged to make many sacrifices for the public welfare.

For the toiler, Sunday is a day of rest and recreation. In these feverish times there is a tendency to make it a day of riot and sin. Such scandalous relaxation is a profanation of the Lord's day. Innocent amusements and legitimate pleasure are allowed, when his duty to God is performed. Yet he must not scandalize his neighbor nor bring odium on the Church. Pharisaical objections may be dismissed without consideration. He must remember at all times that the Commandment of God was perpetual and obligatory, and that the blessings promised the chosen people will be conferred on every Christian who obeys His word and keeps His day holy.

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SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: THE LOVE OF GOD

TEXT

Jesus said to him: Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.—MATT. xxii. 37, 38.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. The scene of to-day's Gospel was the portico of the Temple in Jerusalem. It was Holy Week, and the Pharisees and Sadducees were redoubling their efforts to entrap our Lord. One of the former, a doctor of the Law, perhaps hoping to induce Jesus to say something contrary to the Law of Moses, or to show Himself ignorant of its teaching, asked the Saviour to name the greatest Commandment in the Law. To whom our Lord responded, in the words of Deuteronomy and Leviticus (Deut. vi. 4; Levit. xix. 18), that the first and greatest Commandment was to love God with all the powers and faculties of our being.

I. **What it means to love God.** 1. To love God is not merely counseled, but commanded, as we see from to-day's Gospel. 2. This Commandment forbids two things: (a) hatred of God, such as is entertained by those who wish there were no God; (b) mortal sin, by which the creature is preferred to the Creator. 3. Love of God may be of two kinds: (a) *the love of gratitude,* by which we love God for our own sake, *i.e.,* because He is good to us; (b) *the love of friendship* or *charity,* by which we love God for His sake; *i.e.,* because of His infinite perfections. Both these kinds of love are laudable, but the former should not exclude the latter, nor should our own advantage be the principal motive of our love of God.

II. **Why we should love God.** 1. We are bound to love God because He has commanded us to do so, and has declared that it is the first and greatest Commandment. 2. Even though it were not commanded, God would deserve from us *the love of charity, i.e.,* love for His own sake, on account of His infinite perfections. Everything that is good among creatures wins our affection and admiration. How much more then should we love the source and fountain whence all these perfections of creatures come! 3. Again, even though it were not commanded, God would deserve our *love of gratitude,* because of all He has done for us; He has loved us from eternity, He has bestowed upon us every good we possess, He has given His own Son for our redemption and salvation.

III. **How we should love God.** 1. Our love of God should be supreme, *i.e.,* we should prefer Him above all things else, and be willing to lose everything rather than gravely offend Him or cease to love Him. 2. We should love God, (a) with our *whole hearts, i.e.,* with all the affections of our heart, so that no contrary love should have part in our affections; (b) with our *whole soul, i.e.,* with all our spiritual faculties—memory, will, and understanding; (c) with our *whole mind,* which means that our thoughts and intentions should be directed toward God; (d) with all our *strength,* which means that all our actions should be for His service. 3. In order to love God in this supreme manner it is sufficient, (a) that we are always habitually disposed and ready to prefer God to every created thing; (b) that we make explicit acts of love of God from time to time, especially when tempted, and if we need to recover the state of grace and cannot go to confession. 4. A person can make all his daily good acts and works so many acts of love of God by offering to God at the beginning of the day all his thoughts, words and actions, even though he be too occupied thereafter to think of God during the day. Without the proper intention, how many good works and actions are lost to merit and are fruitless for eternal life!

EXHORTATION. 1. One can easily discover whether or not he

loves God by the following questions: (a) does he love to pray? a friend loves to converse with a friend; (b) does he keep the Commandments? Our Lord says if we love Him we will keep His Commandments; (c) does he love his neighbor? Our Lord in to-day's Gospel says the love of the neighbor is like to the first Commandment. 2. A person may not be able to say many prayers, or fast and abstain, or do great works, or give alms; but no one can say that he cannot love God. 3. Let us not fail to sanctify all our works and actions of each day by making the morning offering and intention.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

(See 23rd Sunday after Pentecost, and also Sunday after Epiphany.)

Sermons

The Greatest and the First Commandment

BY THE REV. ARTHUR DEVINE, C.P.

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment.—Matt. xxii. 37, 38. St. Mark adds: *And with thy whole strength.*—xii. 30.

INTRODUCTION

A few days before His passion, when our Lord was teaching in the Temple, the doctors of the law tempting Him, proposed several questions concerning faith and morals, and even questions of politics. The leaders of the Jews had decided to put Him to death, but they feared the people, and therefore they determined if possible to make Him odious to the people by endeavoring to represent Him as a false teacher. For this purpose the Herodians had questioned Him as to paying tribute to Caesar; the Sadducees proposed a difficulty about the doctrine of the resurrection, and now we find one of the scribes

from among the Pharisees asking a question as to the first precept of the law. It was a question on which two of the leading schools of the Jews of that day were disagreed, and the lawyer put the question to our Lord hoping that He would commit Himself to some error in His reply, so as to be treated as an enemy of the traditions revered by the people.

Our Lord answered in the words of the text: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God," etc. It is the same Commandment and given in the same words as that which we read in the sixth chapter of Deuteronomy, and it is the compendium of all the Commandments written on the first table of the Law. The love of our neighbor, which Christ immediately added, is the compendium of those on the second table. It is the greatest and the first Commandment of the divine law. That which is impressed naturally on the soul of every human being, which was placed first on the Decalogue, and which is here solemnly announced by our Divine Saviour. You are invited to consider this great Commandment by the Gospel read in the Mass of to-day, and to consider it not according to Jewish interpretations and traditions, but as it has been taught and explained by the example and doctrine of Christ, handed down to us by the traditions and the laws of Christian faith and morality. Let us then consider:

1. The true meaning of charity or the love of God.
2. The virtue or habit of charity.
3. The acts of charity as elicited or commanded by the virtue.

THE MEANING OF CHARITY

Charity is a supernatural and infused virtue which enables us to love God above all things. St. Thomas in treating of charity proves that it is a virtue, because it reaches unto God and unites us to Him according to the saying of St. Augustine: "Charity is a virtue which, when our affection is right, unites us to God and enables us to love Him."

It is not only a virtue but it is the most excellent of all virtues according to the words of St. Paul: "And now there

remain faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity" (1 Cor. xiii. 13). It is, as St. Thomas teaches, the form of the virtues, since by it the acts of all other virtues are directed to this ultimate end. This teaching is founded on those texts of Sacred Scripture which declare that without charity the other virtues are dead, and can not profit us to eternal life. The other virtues are of themselves so imperfect that unless informed by charity they do not render a man really virtuous, but charity is in itself so perfect that it renders a man in the true spiritual sense really good, and it subordinates the other virtues to itself, and directs them to its own end, which is God and God alone. Cardinal Bona thus writes concerning charity: "Holiness consists in purity of every description, and in an immovable union with God, which is perfected by the closest bond of love. When the soul, being purged from all the rust of earthly affections, and elevated above all things, has reached the perfection of justice, then it may truly say with the Apostle: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword? . . . For I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, . . . nor any creature shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. viii. 35-39). Fasting, alms, the chastisement of the flesh and other exercises of the same kind, avail much toward obtaining holiness, but without charity they do not profit us to salvation. Although we may distribute all our goods to the poor and deliver our bodies to be burned and have not charity, according to the same Apostle, it profiteth us nothing.

This is the virtue which is commanded by the greatest and the first precept of the law, and the extent of its obligation may be understood from the words: "With thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, with thy whole mind, and with thy whole strength." Some attach a distinct meaning to each of these words, but we need not be too anxious to know and remember their distinction. It is sufficient to know that by the

word heart is here meant the affections and the soul, and that the intellect or understanding is designated by the mind, and that, therefore, in explaining the text of the Commandment we may understand "with thy whole heart, soul, and mind" as an energetic repetition, which, in different words, inculcates the same duty; namely, to love God as much as possible above all things and in all things. God is worthy of all the love we can give, and we can never love Him to excess and as He deserves to be loved. The measure of the love of God is, therefore, to love Him without measure.

According to St. Paul, charity or love is the fulfilling of the law. St. Francis de Sales well explains how this is the case. He says: "The perfection of charity is so far elevated above that of the other virtues that, though it communicates itself to them all, it can not receive any additional value from them, not even from obedience, in which all the other virtues participate most abundantly. For though we obey in loving God, yet our love does not derive its perfection from obedience, but from its sovereign and eternal object; if it is the most excellent of all virtues, it is not because we obey in practicing it, but because its motive is the most excellent of all perfections, being divine. In observing the Commandment of love, we certainly obey, and we prove our love by obeying; but the perfection of obedience is not derived from the docility which animates our love, but from the love which inflames our obedience. Hence we may conclude, that as God is the principle and the term of all that is good, so charity, which is the source and origin of all holy affections, is likewise their end and perfection" (Treatise on "The Love of God," Bk. xi., Ch. ix.).

Charity thus explained may be considered as a habit or virtue, or as an act, and it is to these two aspects of charity that your attention is now invited.

HABITUAL CHARITY

With regard to the habit of charity we may ask how is the precept to be understood, or what is the obligation which it imposes? To this we may reply by the following statements,

which contain the explanation needed for the direction of souls:

1. By the precept of charity we are not, as already stated, obliged to that supreme degree of love which is beyond the capacity of created beings, namely to love God as much as He is worthy of love or as much as He deserves to be loved. That infinite love belongs to the persons of the Most Holy Trinity, and it is not possible to creatures even in heaven, where the angels and saints enjoy the most perfect union with God.

2. Neither are we commanded to be always actually intent upon the love of God by a continual effort of affection, without any distraction or interruption, because a love of this kind is granted only to the Blessed in heaven.

3. Neither does the precept imply that we are to be free from temptations, and from all rebellion on the part of our sensitive and inferior appetites or faculties against the law of God. This is not always in the power of mortal man or wayfarers in this world.

4. The precept means this, namely, that according to the condition of our state here on earth, we are to love the Lord our God for His own sake, above all things, so that we esteem nothing so much as God, that we refer all our actions to His great honor and glory, and that we be ready to suffer and endure everything rather than admit anything into our lives contrary to the love and the will of God; that is, that we preserve our souls in a state of sanctifying grace, and guard them against the stain of any sin that would banish that grace and render us the enemies of God—expose us to His wrath. From these statements we can conclude and proclaim some familiar truth which can not be too often repeated, nor too well impressed upon our mind. The Lord our God is to be loved (1) in His essence and in His will; (2) He is to be loved by choice and, in appreciation at least, above all things; (3) the love of God is not exclusive, but it is the chief and the principal love of our hearts; (4) it need not be sensibly felt, but it should be efficacious. God is to be loved in His essence, because in Himself He is most lovable, containing, as He does, all good-

ness, infinite wisdom, and infinite beauty, of which we have only the representation and shadow in the goodness, wisdom, and beauty of His creatures. God is to be loved in His will, or in His law because it is the best and most perfect and ordains all that is good and holy for our welfare and happiness. God is to be loved above all things; that is, above all creatures or created goods, such as fortune, honors, riches, parents, friends, yea, even more than life itself. This is what is meant when we say that the love of God must be supreme at least by choice and in appreciation. The mind and heart are to esteem the goodness of God and His will above everything else, and His divine will is to be preferred to all that is contrary thereto or prohibited by His law. When it is said again that the love of God is not exclusive we are to understand that it does not shut out every other love, for we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. It is, however, exclusive in one sense, namely, that it excludes the love that is contrary to it, that is, sinful love, and in all other affections it is required that the love of God be supreme, that it be the first love of the heart, and that all other love be subordinate to it.

Although the love of God may sometimes overflow and gain access to our feelings, it is not at all necessary that it does this, or that it be sensibly felt, because it resides in the superior part of the soul, namely, in the will. It must, however, be efficacious, that is, not a mere wishing or a complacency, but a true and sincere love which determines the will to accept all the Commandments of God and to observe them with fidelity and to conform itself in all things to the Divine will.

ACTUAL CHARITY

We have now to consider charity as to its acts in order to bring home to our minds the full force and extent of the law of charity.

Actual charity, or an act of the love of God, is necessary as a means of salvation for all adults who have come to the use of reason. St. John says: "And every one that loveth is born

of God, and knoweth God; he that loveth not, knoweth not God, for God is charity" (1 John iv. 7). This act of charity should be supernatural, so as to proceed from grace; it must have as its object God, as He is the author of our being and our final end; and its motive must be the goodness of God as known by faith or in the supernatural order.

The act of charity is not only necessary as a means of salvation, it is also necessary by reason of the Divine precept. The precept to love God above all things is special, both in respect to the internal love of the heart and the external effect of that love, namely, the keeping of the Commandments. This precept of making an explicit act of charity obliges all, according to the common teaching of theologians, as soon as they come to the use of reason, at the hour of death, and often during life. It also obliges as often as we are bound to recover the grace of God, and to repent of our sins, that is, in cases when a perfect act of contrition is required for the recovery of God's grace. In such an act there is included an act of charity. It may also be necessary to make such an act in order to overcome some grave temptation, and implicitly the act of charity may be often included in other acts of prayer and devotion.

Let us not, however, limit these acts to any particular time or circumstance, but rather let us make them as frequently as possible, and let us do this especially for the purpose of increasing the charity of God in our souls and increasing our beatitude in heaven. Charity has to be increased by its own acts, and it belongs to charity to raise up the acts of all the other virtues, and to make them her own. When we say that a man is sometimes bound to elicit an act of theological charity, we have to think of the motive of such an act. A true act of charity is such that our whole being and all our works are referred to God, loved for His own sake. The precept of charity is that we love God with our whole heart, and soul, and mind, and strength, and this means that all things be referred to Him; and, therefore, a man cannot fulfil this precept without referring all to God. This ordination of all our acts to God, loved for His own sake, which has to be sometimes repeated,

remains as long as it is not formally or implicitly revoked, and if revoked it ought to be renewed by a fresh act of charity. Therefore, let us reflect that though the acts of the other virtues in order to be meritorious of eternal life need not be commanded by charity; at the same time the habit of charity can not be inactive, and it cannot abide long in a man before it passes into acts and refers all other acts to its own proper object and end; namely, to God, our first beginning and our final end.

CONCLUSION

"In this is charity," says St. John, "not as though we had loved God, but because he hath first loved us" (1 John iv. 10). The one motive to incline our hearts more and more to the love of God is or ought to be His great love for us, which we may unite with the primary motive of charity; namely, God's own goodness and excellence. The love of God for us may be regarded at the same time as the motive and as the pattern of our love for Him. St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says: "That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts: that being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth" (Eph. iii. 17, 18). These words reveal to us the four properties of Divine charity. The length, which may be said to be its eternal duration. The charity of God is eternal—without beginning. "I have loved thee," He says, "with an eternal love." It will last forever unless we sever ourselves from it and render ourselves unworthy of it by the guilt of sin. The breadth as applied to charity signifies the extent of Divine love, as it embraces all men and wills their salvation, and although that Divine charity extends to all, it is not on this account anything the less for each one. The height of Divine charity appears in two things, namely, in God elevating men to the dignity of His children and to be heirs of His kingdom. And in order to effect this by the Incarnation of His divine Son He raised up human nature to union with the God-head that in our own nature He might suffer and die for us and pur-

chase our salvation by the shedding of His own most precious blood. "God so loved the world as to send his only begotten Son" (John iii. 16). The height of this Divine charity is also revealed to us in the Holy Eucharist, in which Christ still abides with us and gives Himself to us as the food and nourishment of our souls. The depth of the love of God appears in the humiliations to which our Saviour submitted for our sakes during His Passion: "He emptied himself; he humbled himself, becoming obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross" (Phil. ii. 7, 8). The profundity of Divine charity may also be understood from the manner in which God purifies the souls whom He especially loves, namely, by much suffering, by many tribulations, by crosses and humiliations, that they may be conformed to the image of His own Divine Son, thus showing to us the truth of the words of His Apostle: "To them that love God, all things work together unto good, to such as according to his purpose are called to be saints" (Rom. viii. 28).

Love of God

BY THE REV. F. PEPPERT

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul and with thy whole mind.—Matt. xxii. 37.

WHY GOD COMMANDS US TO LOVE HIM

When God commands us to love Him, it is not because He derives any advantage, pleasure or additional honor from our doing so; it is inevitable that a creature must glorify God, but man, who possesses reason, has it in his power to glorify Him voluntarily or involuntarily. If a man turns to God in love and seeks Him in all that he does, thinks or speaks; if he makes God's glory his aim throughout life, rather than his own welfare; if he cares little about possessing other things, and desires chiefly to be intimately united with his Creator, he is glorifying God voluntarily, and this voluntary service is meritorious to himself. If, on the other hand, he is indifferent

towards God, making himself and not God the object of all his exertions, if he even goes so far as to cherish feelings of hostility to God and His holy Commandments; if he is lost in self-love or in love of created things so completely as to care nothing at all for God, and, having lost all faith, to idolize himself alone and worship material objects, he must still glorify God, although he does so involuntarily. He cannot help glorifying God's wisdom and power that are manifested in man's inability, in spite of all his efforts, to alter the decrees of God. Thus Joseph's brethren glorified God's wisdom, for, when they despised the Lord and His Commandments and sold their brother into slavery, they were actually assisting to carry out God's designs.

Goliath mocked the people of Israel and their God, but he was giving an opportunity to God's loving providence to reveal itself, and he was overcome and slain by the hand of the youngest and most insignificant among the chosen people. Nabuchodonosor commanded divine honors to be rendered to his statue, but his wickedness only contributed to God's glory, for his real weakness, and the weakness of all who rebel against God, became apparent when he went mad. Those who refuse to love God, cannot help contributing to His glory, in spite of their bad will, for in their case His justice is revealed, and after vainly struggling against His will, they are finally overtaken by eternal punishment. It depends, therefore, upon a man's will whether he loves God, and by loving Him glorifies Him and obtains his own salvation; or whether, turning away from God, he glorifies Him by his own weakness and suffering, and finally loses his own soul.

IMPORTANCE OF THIS COMMANDMENT

When our Saviour told us that the Commandment requiring us to love God was the first and greatest of all the Commandments, He was aiming at nothing but our good; and to-day's Gospel is a loving admonition to be careful for our own salvation. Why are we often so lukewarm, doing right in a mechanical way, by force of habit, rather than zealously and

with real interest in the welfare of our souls? We act in a most contradictory way, for we forget and neglect what is indispensable to our happiness, although there is innate in all our hearts a constant craving after it. The care for our own salvation should be the most important business of our lives, for it affects something infinitely more desirable than all the advantages of this world. If we are really anxious to be saved, we shall seek the love of God, indestructible, unchanging—peace of heart and eternal bliss. Our salvation means our being united with the great, wise, loving God, our knowing Him as He is, in all His infinite grace and mercy, our recognizing in all His works the unfathomable greatness of His power, our loving Him, as children love their father, though with a far closer and more heartfelt love, having no wishes or cravings apart from this love, but being filled with peace and joy, such as our feeble, perishable hearts now cannot contain.

If we think of this glory in God, this intense, ineffable love of Him, is it possible for us not to wish most earnestly to attain to it? Must not every other longing, every dream of earth vanish before it? Are we not drawn irresistibly towards Him who is our All? Can any desire for earthly things make us deaf to the call of this holy love and of eternal happiness?

EXHORTATION

Man exerts himself to win prosperity in this world, although it is often a mere phantom, so fleeting as to deserve rather to be described as misery. Our only true happiness, our only true joy, truth, clearness of vision and bliss are in heaven. Let this be our aim, let us not cast away our treasure in heaven for the sake of the filth of earth. Yet this simile is most inadequate; for we are speaking of something absolutely indescribable, the possession of God Himself. Can we throw this aside for some fleeting advantage here? No; it is indispensable for us to labor earnestly for our own salvation, in order to secure it. You all know the parable of the five foolish virgins, who, having no oil, went too late to purchase some, and consequently came to the bridegroom's door only to find it closed, and to hear Him

say: "I know you not." If now, in the days of our health, whilst we have strength and vigor, we do not trouble to know Jesus and His love, if we have in our hearts no fire of love, no ardent longing to serve God and please Christ, if our good works do not shine with light, how shall we fare at the hour of death, when through our whole being rings the cry: "The Bridegroom cometh"?

Black darkness will prevail within us, for the joys of this world will no longer charm us as in our time of health; the consolations of the world will leave us cold, and even if we try to persuade ourselves that our illness is not dangerous, we shall still hear the cry: "The Bridegroom cometh." Then we shall look for the lamp that has perhaps long been extinguished; and it may be that with sorrow we shall have to confess: "It burned brightly in my childhood, but gradually I forgot this lamp of Divine love, and now it has gone out and lies neglected in some obscure corner." In our urgent need we may look for it and try to set light to it, but we shall have no oil; the good works that we have failed to do cannot then be accomplished. It is possible for the foolish virgins to find mercy at the last hour, but the merit that they failed to secure is gone for ever. Let us be eager *now* to make our salvation sure. Let us set to work quietly, but with determination, and labor at our task by fervent prayer, by faithful fulfilment of our duties, by obedience and by conquering the enemy, who, like a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour. Do not put off matters until to-morrow, for your enemy who desires your ruin will not postpone his assaults; he is always awake, and will miss no opportunity of destroying you when he finds you off your guard. To-morrow may never come, so do your best to-day to secure your salvation, for perhaps the night is already close at hand, when no man can work. Amen.

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EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

GRACE

TEXT

I give thanks to my God always for you, for the grace of God that is given you in Christ Jesus.—1 Cor. i. 4.

Analysis

Introduction. The city of Corinth was one of the greatest centers of art, literature, science, business and wealth of ancient times. The people there prided themselves on their learning and worldly attainments for which they were so highly famed far and near. But St. Paul, when addressing this letter to the faithful of that illustrious city, thanked God, not for their wealth or their earthly knowledge, but for the fact that they had come to understand the Gospel of Christ and were the recipients of the grace of God.

The same heavenly benefits of which the Corinthians were the objects are also ours, for we too have a knowledge of the Gospel and have been blessed with the grace of Christ. It is of highest importance that we should understand and reflect often upon this greatest gift of God to our souls—His grace.

I. **The meaning of grace.** 1. In a wide sense grace means everything we have received from God, such as life, health,

talents, riches, etc. Strictly speaking grace is a supernatural gift of God, freely bestowed upon us for our sanctification and salvation. It is called: (a) a *gift* of God, because we have no claim or title to it of ourselves; (b) it is called *supernatural*, because it surpasses all natural blessings, as the eternal surpasses the temporal. 2. Grace is of two kinds—sanctifying grace, and actual grace. The former is an abiding condition or quality by which our soul is made pleasing and holy in the sight of God. Actual grace is a transient help given us by God, enabling us to do good and avoid evil; it consists in illuminations of the mind or in pious impulses of the will. Those who possess sanctifying grace are in the state of grace, but actual grace is given even to those who are in a state of sin.

II. **The necessity of grace.** 1. Without actual grace we can do nothing towards our salvation: "without me you can do nothing" (John xv. 5; cf. 2 Cor. iii. 5; 1 Cor. xii. 3). Grace, therefore, is necessary to begin, to continue, and to complete every supernatural work. As an infant is unable to know or to ask for the assistance it needs, so we without grace cannot even desire, much less request the things necessary for our salvation. 2. Since grace is so necessary, we should always distrust ourselves, and humble ourselves before God. 3. Without habitual grace we can do nothing meritorious of eternal life, and if we die in such a state, we shall be like the man without the wedding garment, who was bound hands and feet, and cast out into exterior darkness (Matt. xxii. 11–13). 4. If one is blessed with the state of grace he should pray to continue in it, he should ask that God will confirm him "unto the end without crime in the day of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" (to-day's Epistle). If one has not the state of grace he should seek to recover it by prayer, contrition, and the use of the Sacrament of Penance.

III. **The efficacy of divine grace.** 1. Since divine grace is the power and strength of God working within our souls, there is nothing impossible to man thus assisted. All the conversions

of sinners, all the marvelous deeds of the saints are the effect of divine grace. 2. The grace of God is given to all to begin a holy life, and enough more will be given, if asked for, to attain to salvation. God commands us to do what we can, and to pray for what is beyond our power, and He will aid us to accomplish what is necessary for us: "I can do all things in him who strengtheneth me" (Philipp. iv. 13).

Exhortation. 1. God gives us His grace, but we are free to reject it, or to co-operate with it; it will be of no use to us unless we co-operate with it, by good works, by the use of the Sacraments, by humility and distrust of self, and by confident prayer to God. We must not receive the grace of God in vain (2 Cor. vi. 1). 2. As St. Paul thanked God for the graces given to the Corinthians, so we should ever be grateful to God for His many divine illuminations, impulses and helps, remembering that gratitude for favors received will dispose the Giver to grant us further gifts.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

(See Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost in Dogmatic Series)

Sermons

Grace; Actual Grace

BY THE REV. JOHN H. STAPLETON

But to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ.—Ephes. iv. 7.

INTRODUCTION

"I had rather feel compunction," says the author of the "Imitation," "than know its definition." So might we say of grace—which is measured out to every one of us—that the proper use of it is of vastly more profit than the ability to define it correctly or a profound knowledge of its mysteries. We know little of grace.

No human mind has ever fathomed the depths of this mystery. Yet, than this term, grace, there is perhaps none more familiar on the lips of Christians. Accustomed to employ it on innumerable occasions, we understand in a general way what is meant by it. Our perception may not be of the clearest, nor our information the most minute and complete, nor our method of comprehension the most scientific, so to speak. But our knowledge of it, such as it is, is sufficient for all practical purposes.

It is so with many things of this world. Ask men what electricity is, ask the learned, ask the expert. Or the best qualified physician who deals so knowingly and so successfully with human life, inquire of him if he knows what human life is. They speak long and write voluminously on these matters. Each observes the manifestations of the mysterious energy before him, studies its properties and mode of action, and applies, for the great benefit of mankind, the learning and information thus acquired. But it ever remains a *mysterious* energy, and of its precise nature they know not a word; of what it really is, they are still profoundly ignorant. Our experience is the same concerning this mysterious force which we call grace; it *is* a mystery. But, if in a field strikingly analogous, the man of science or the man of medicine knows no more, and if his is a working knowledge, sufficient for all the purposes of his art: so should our imperfect discernment of the supernatural virtue of grace be considered sufficient for the transcendent needs of our immortal souls.

MEANING OF GRACE

What, then, as far as we can know, is grace? Is it something we can see and touch and taste? Is it something one can take in hand, subject to chemical analysis, decompose into its several elements and thus come to determine accurately its precise nature and properties? It belongs not to this world of things. Holy Scripture tells us, and the Little Catechism reminds us, simply that it is a gift, a divine gift. This gift is divine in a fourfold aspect. First, because it is *from* God, who is the donor and its source. Then, it is a gift *of* God, for it is a participation, in some manner, of the life and nature of God, a communication of a

divine energy; a virtue not belonging to the human nature with which we are endowed, not essentially required by it as such, infinitely beyond and above any force that can be conceived within or without man in the order of pure nature. Thirdly, this bounty of grace is *for* God, its purpose being, for God's glory, to make possible in us a certain shaping and form of life and action in this world, which alone can insure salvation and eternal happiness for us in the next; to assist us in doing and living according to the will of God, after a manner pleasing to Him and worthy of a reward. Finally, *through* God in Christ is it procured for us and bestowed upon us, since to it we have no rightful claim or title, do not and cannot deserve it, are insufficient to procure it for ourselves: Christ alone obtained it for us; He, suffering and dying merited for us; and His merits purchased for us this gift, the means of our salvation.

This explains why grace is called a spiritual, not a material gift, since it is not made up of things of earth, not a material gift which we receive; but pertains to God, the giver, who is a Spirit; to the soul, the recipient, which is a spirit; and cannot be seen by bodily eyes. So, too, is it called supernatural, because it belongs to an order of things superior to that nature according to which we have been created. It is inevitable, therefore, that it should be a mysterious gift which our natural powers are incapable of fully comprehending, for it does not fall within the range of our natural senses and faculties. If perceived at all, it must be perceived by that higher sense which we possess, that is, faith. And let us not forget that faith is just as surely a faculty for perceiving and knowing, as are the senses of seeing and hearing and tasting.

ACTUAL GRACE

It is clearly within the power of us all to conceive two sorts of gifts. Some are like the alms which we drop into the outstretched hand of the poor beggar; our pity and compassion moves us to help him in his misery, to relieve his immediate wants, to enable him to procure the food or shelter necessary to prevent his dying of cold or hunger. Other gifts are like

the steady, constant flow of an assured income, whereon the fortunate heir draws inexhaustibly and is thus enabled to live a life of comfort and luxury. The former is a passing, the latter a lasting gift. The one is offered for the need of the moment and ceases as soon as the need is past; the other abides as long as the worthiness of the recipient.

And so we speak of two kinds of divine grace. The one is a transitory succor or support, the other a permanent state or condition of being established to persevere. The former is a stimulus that quickens and facilitates action, makes it possible to think, to will, to do, according to God; the latter creates a state of ready fitness and vigor, of lasting comfort and pleasure. The one is like a flash of light which illumines the murky darkness—a jolt to the selfish, sluggish, faltering will—a sudden and mighty uplift to achieve what is begun and to complete it. The other is like the constant glow of the noon-day orb, the continuous pressure of a potent force, the exuberance of superadded strength and health and life.

No one but sees at once how fittingly this gift or assistance for a momentary want is called actual grace, since it is a virtue communicated to the soul to enable it to produce an act, either of the mind, by thought—or of the will, by desire—or of the body, by deed. Once the act performed, the assistance ceases, the gift expires—there being no further necessity for it. Actual grace is therefore an immediate aid lent to us on an occasion of need. It may be a light to our intellect, making it possible for us to think or understand; or a strength to our will whereby the hard course of duty is chosen and the "primrose path of dalliance" avoided, despite the difficulties on the one hand or on the other the allurements, which are foreseen. It may be a warmth to our affections creating anew the fires of affection or zeal or enthusiasm. Now, it is a warning in danger, a suggestion in folly, a solace in discouragement. Again, a person or presence, a bit of news, a circumstance of time or place, a happening or accident, a misfortune according to men. It may be the most natural thing in the world apparently, and yet be due to the power that "worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."

OUR NEED OF GRACE

We are told in the text that "to every one of us is given grace, according to the measure of the giving of Christ." Now, what is this "measure of the giving of Christ!" The first measure of that giving is certainly the intrinsic necessity of grace itself; God gives it to us according to the need we have of it. It is plain that without grace some deeds naturally and morally good may be performed, some truths of faith known, some precepts of the natural law observed, for our human nature is not wholly corrupt and vitiated by original sin. But it is equally certain that nothing so accomplished is according to the end for which man was created. Man's end is not that of the beast of the field—to pass, after a life of the senses, into nothingness—a mere natural end. He was created to see and enjoy God in an after life of infinite bliss, but here and now to know and serve Him as He wishes to be known and served, that is, in a manner in keeping with his end, and worthy of it. That end, which is God, is therefore supernatural; and no means but those which are supernatural can be expected to lead to that end. Natural forces alone cannot do this. Water cannot rise above its level; neither can nature rise above itself.

Here is a stone. It exists but has not feeling. And feeling it cannot give itself, or have, unless the almighty power which created it interfere to operate a miraculous change. So is it supernatural, so to speak, for a mountain or tree to move about and walk. A fish cannot run or fly about in the air above, nor can the beast reason and talk, for such manners of being and of doing are not according to the nature which God gave them, but belong to natures superior to theirs, and are therefore supernatural to them. And so, because left to himself man disposes only of natural means, he cannot without grace attain to the higher life to which he is called, or even strive after it by a becoming service, or even aim at so lofty a goal. No supernatural work of any kind can be accomplished by the unaided forces of nature; nothing "according to God" can be performed except with the assistance of grace.

On His way from Galilee to Jerusalem the Saviour came to

the village of Jericho, and entering therein He walked through its streets, accompanied by the multitude who surrounded Him and pressed in His footsteps. Lost in the numerous throng was one Zacheus, a man chief among the publicans and, by reason of his extortions, possessed of much wealth. And the Gospel remarks that Zacheus was "low of stature"; and that "he sought to see Jesus who he was, but he could not for the crowd." Not, however, to be deprived of the blessed privilege he coveted of beholding the divine countenance, he ran ahead and climbed into a sycamore tree "that he might see him, for he was to pass that way." And he saw. Nay, more, he was seen. And that day salvation came to the house of Zacheus.

It is not without significance for us that Zacheus is described as being a sinner and "low of stature"; and able to see Christ only after climbing into a sycamore tree; and by this means overcoming his natural disability and being raised aloft, above his natural condition. By nature and by sin, we, too, are in a state of lowliness and debasement in the presence of the infinite God. His abode is inaccessible to flesh and blood, weak and tainted with sin. In our lives He passes, He is continually passing. If we succeed in seeing or hearing Him, if we believe in Him and keep His precepts, if we do anything according to the plan of His holy will, anything pertaining to heaven and its reward, it is only after we are lifted up from earth, as was Zacheus, raised above our natural conditions of sinfulness and assisted by that power which "worketh in us both to will and to accomplish."

We can well afford to take the word of God Himself for this: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him." The name of God on our lips is not according to God, if it be not grace that moves us to utter it: "and no man can say the Lord Jesus but by the Holy Ghost." Not even a good thought is possible, for St. Paul affirms that we are "not sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God." In a word: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish."

"And the Lord said: Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have

prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Observe how Peter himself, the Prince of the Apostles, the rock upon which Christ built His Church, even Peter would not have persevered in fidelity to his Master, and avoided to the end the snares of the wily one, had not grace been secured unto him by the prayer of Christ. If without that help Peter would have fallen and been lost; what hope can we have of pursuing constantly the right course unassisted by a like virtue from above?

God has imposed upon us the yoke of His service and the burden of His law. That yoke is sweet, we are told, and that burden light, but only on condition of our availing ourselves of the divine assistance to bear it. Otherwise the yoke is galling and the burden impossible. He who struggles alone and unaided, who relies on his own native strength, who invokes not and obtains not this prop which nature requires essentially, is doomed to failure and disaster—the inevitable outcome of an impossible task. It is labor lost to strive to climb the clouds, in the superior region of God, on a ladder of one's own invention and make; the ladder, like that of Jacob, must be let down from above—God's hand stretched forth to uplift. In the atmosphere of the supernatural no airship—the fruit of human ingenuity—can be made to soar high or steer a straight course, or long persevere without the calamity of failure which attends all human efforts, due to the inherent faults and weaknesses of all things human. And those who have failed, and who fail, in the matter of God's service, are those who would trust too much in their own powers and reckon without the power which said: "Without me you can do nothing."

GRACE GIVEN TO ALL

If without Him we can do nothing, what is more reasonable to expect than that with Him we should be able to do all things necessary! And this, according to the teaching of the Church, is precisely the case, once more "according to the measure of the giving of Christ." St. Luke speaks of this measure when he tells us that it is "good measure, and pressed down, and shaken together, and running over"—full and complete, then,

in every sense. It is the will of God that all men shall be saved. Since grace is essential to all that pertains to salvation —its beginning, its progress, and its achievement—then the measure of Christ's giving it is boundless, inexhaustible, offered to all, denied to none. It may be that all of us are not born to rise to an equal level of holiness, but not one but has at his disposal enough of the divine assistance to overcome every temptation, practice every virtue, accomplish every good, however difficult, perform his whole duty and thus arrive securely at the goal of eternal happiness. This is why St. Paul could say with utter confidence: "I can do all things in Him that strengtheneth me."

REJECTION OF GRACE

What, then, is the secret of the failure of some men to serve God and save their souls? How is it that grace, which the law of our fallen nature requires and which it is the will of God that all men should possess in sufficient fulness, is wanting in many —and thereby God, who is the Light, is not seen by faith; and "his commandments," which St. John tells us, "are not heavy," become unbearable; and the light yoke is made overwhelming, and the sweet burden bitter beyond endurance? "O ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and ye men of Judea, judge between me and my vineyard. What is there that I ought to do more to my vineyard that I have not done to it?" If Zacheus, his view obstructed by the encompassing throng, had stood at the foot of the sycamore tree and refused to make the effort necessary to climb therein, and had thus missed the sight of the passing Saviour: to what would have to be ascribed his failure to see and the failure of salvation to come to his house?

God's grace is that "peace on earth to men of good will." This, too, is the "measure of the giving of Christ," that it depends on our good will to accept it, to do all that in us lies to be worthy of it. The wicked perish, says St. Augustine, not because they could not be good but because they *would* not. It is possible, by a perverse will, to nullify the will of the Almighty in our regard, which is, that the grace offered us shall produce

within us results of virtue and salvation. It is possible by unworthy dispositions, by malice, by selfishness, by cowardice, to prevent God from working "in us both to will and to accomplish." This is only too true; this truth is only too apparent. The wicked servant in the Gospel well knew the will of his master, but refused to act according to it. The slothful servant received his talent with the rest; but he did not make it fructify, he hid it in the earth. "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised of heart and ears," cried out St. Stephen, "you always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do you also." "Judge between me and my vineyard," said the Lord—He had done to it all that He ought to have done; He wished that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes. And listen to the pathetic complaint of the rejected Christ: "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killeth the prophets, and stonest them that are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered together thy children, as the hen doth gather her chickens under her wing, but thou *wouldst* not."

Actual grace is a passing of the Lord in our lives. If through our fault we miss Him, He is gone; and the grace lost will never return. Zacheus understood what it was worth to look upon the countenance of the Lord. If, unlike him, we do nothing, He will pass unawares, as He did when the mob rose up and thrust Him out of their city of Nazareth and brought Him to the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong: "But he, passing through the midst of them, went his way." Actual grace is a visitation. If we receive Him not into the house of our souls, as did the publican, to our house salvation will not come.

"And the last state of that man is made worse than the first. So shall it be also to this wicked generation" who, having the divine assistance offered to them, correspond not therewith. Grace rejected is grace withdrawn. The soul is then left to its native powers. Then the mind is darkened in default of light from above; the will is weakened because there is no supernatural strength forthcoming; the heart is hardened, as was Pharao's, as a consequence of God's love abused. Asking not, they do not receive; seeking not, they do not find; failing to knock, it is not opened unto them. Before them is "life and

death, good and evil: that which they shall choose shall be given them": if evil and death, then evil and death. If "the days come upon thee and thy enemies cast a trench about thee, and compass thee around and straiten thee on every side and beat thee flat to the ground"—as befell perverse Jerusalem—it will be "because thou hast not known the time of thy visitation." "Because I called and you refused: (because) I stretched out my hand, and there was none that regarded: (because) you have despised my counsels and have neglected my reprehensions—I also will laugh in your destruction and will mock when that shall come to you which you feared . . . Then shall you call upon me and I will not hear: they shall rise in the morning and shall not find me. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own ways, and shall be filled with their own devices."

CONCLUSION

Let us then know this much of the mysterious gift of grace: that without it we cannot attempt to do the will of God on earth or attain to His blessed reward in the next; that it is offered to us all in the plenitude of the divine goodness; that we may use or abuse it according to the free will with which God has endowed us. Let us then look "diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God."

Sanctifying Grace

BY THE REV. JOHN H. STAPLETON

And I live, now not I; but Christ liveth in me.—Gal. ii. 2

INTRODUCTION

Zacheus had climbed into the sycamore tree on the passage of the Saviour through the hamlet of Jericho. This he did because, being "low of stature"—a sinner—he could not otherwise have beheld the divine countenance of Him who was passing. "And when Jesus was come to the place, looking up, he

saw him, and said: Zacheus, make haste and come down; for this day I must abide in thy house; and he made haste and came down; and he received him with joy. . . . Jesus said to him: This day is salvation come to thy house." Remark the transformation wrought in this Zacheus, the type of the natural, sinful man, in the presence of God: how from a stranger he becomes the host of the Lord; from being unable to see Him, he is blessed with the unspeakable favor of possessing Him as a guest; from being detested of men by reason of his official position and of his extortions, he becomes the intimate and friend of Christ; a sinner loaded with iniquity, he receives the assurance of salvation. He enters into the joy of the Lord, he begins a life of union with Him.

Remark again how this abiding of Christ in the house of the chief of the publicans was not an assistance or aid, lent merely for an occasion of need—like the grace, called actual, which was limited to prompting and enabling him to view the countenance of the Son of God; but something permanent and lasting which united him with the divine Friend, whereby he shared with Him, so to speak, a common life; a state of intimacy and affectionate companionship. It was a made-over existence, to which salvation was promised and assured, in which the germ of immortality was planted. This is sanctifying or habitual grace: not a gift that comes and goes according to the necessity of the moment, but an abiding virtue which "is poured forth in the heart, by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." "We will come to him and take our abode in him," says the Holy Spirit. As Christ dwelt visibly in the house of Zacheus, so does God by grace abide invisibly in the soul, creating in us a new manner of being, called supernatural, which is truly a life; and a friendship coloring that life; and an energy capable of producing works in keeping with both that life and that friendship. In other words, this grace flows incessantly, exuberantly upon us if we are properly disposed; and, by its presence in the soul, effects three marvelous results —first, transforming; then justifying and sanctifying; finally energizing the soul unto a capacity for supernatural merits.

SANCTIFYING GRACE IS LIFE

Mysterious as is this gift of sanctifying grace, it is plainly, by analogy, a kind of life: life not natural, but supernatural; not of the body, but of the soul; not human, but divine. We mean by it what St. Paul meant when he said: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me." We mean by it what the Apostle again meant by charity which, he said, "is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, who is given to us." Hear again the voice of inspired authority: "Know you not that you are the temple of God and the spirit of God dwelleth in you?" "You are the temple of the living God." "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost, who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own?" And so we may conceive this gift of God as entering into the soul by the infusion of the spirit of God—a virtue remaining therein, adhering to it so closely as almost to become a part of it, its very self, its very life; penetrating it in all manner, saturating it, so to speak, changing it into itself, somewhat after the fashion of iron plunged into the fire, which becomes heated and glows like the fire itself.

The statement may be an astounding one and far beyond our powers of comprehension, but it is not incorrect to say that this is a divine life and that the soul, which lives by grace, lives by the life of God. Let us recall the story of the origin of the human soul, which is so familiar to us. It is recorded in the Book of Genesis. It is related how the hand of God first fashioned out of the slime of the earth a tenement of flesh to serve as a body to the first human creature, a receptacle for a soul. And while the lifeless form of Adam lay prone before Him, it is written: "And he breathed into his (Adam's) face the breath of life, and man became a living soul." Remember that it was out of His divine bosom that God exhaled His spirit into man—a principle of life which was a spark of the flame of divine life. And it is added that, looking complacently upon the work of His hands, gazing into the face of the creature Adam, God therein discerned His own image and likeness, as in a mirror. He had given life to all living creatures, but in

none but man was His image reflected. There are degrees and qualities of life apparently. But only to the immortal soul of man did the Creator impart that quality of life which approximates so closely to that by which God exists as to be called an image and likeness and reflection of Himself.

Now, that life of the soul may be lost. It may also be recovered. The loss of life is death—if of the soul, spiritual death. But death to the soul, in all Scripture, in all Christian language, in the mind of all believers, is *sin, mortal sin.* Sin destroys the life communicated to the soul by the Maker. Sin quenches the flame breathed into it, defaces the image therein graven, undoes the likeness, annihilates the work within us, which, after its completion, God found to be good. In a word, being *mortal,* it kills; and that identity, as it were, of spiritual nature, which God's breath had established, and which existed between Creator and creature, ceases.

If this life can be recovered, how is it to be recovered? What can restore it? How shall this death be raised to life? How shall this image and likeness of God in the fallen soul of man be revived, and the divine face be made again to shine in his living spirit? But we know that it was precisely to effect this purpose that Christ Jesus came down to earth, undertook and accomplished His redeeming mission; that by His Passion and death He acquired merit for sinful man, by which merit there was purchased for sinners that treasure which we call grace; that He founded a system of seven Sacraments or holy rites, through which this grace is again infused into the soul lost and dead to God by sin. It is grace, then, that repairs the deadly work of sin. And sin being death, what must grace be but life? For what but life can raise from death! Grace, then, as far as we can know, must be life from the same source from which life originally sprang, when, before sin had appeared, Adam received it direct from the bosom of God. It is a sort of divine life, health and vigor, brought to us through channels of mysterious efficacy called Sacraments, resurrecting in us the child of God, making us live, move and have our being in Him, even as it was in the beginning the case with Adam, our first parent.

And this explains why we, who live by grace, are called again

and again and again in the Gospels "sons of God," "children of God," "heirs of God," "co-heirs with Christ," who is God. Therefore, may we pray, as Christ taught us: "Our Father, who art in heaven. . . ." Although sharing with all living things a common origin in God by creation, of man alone and of no other creature was such language spoken, for in a sense far otherwise appropriate are we truly sons of God. And since sons can but reflect the nature of the Father, thus we have the meaning of these extraordinary words of St. Peter, so forbiddingly sublime and at first sight capable of overwhelming us with their awful significance: "By whom (Christ) he (God) hath given us most great and precious promises, that by these you may be made *partakers of the divine nature.*" Verily, then, by grace we live, not we, but Christ liveth in us.

SANCTIFYING GRACE MAKES US FRIENDS OF GOD

"Behold thou art fair, O my love, behold thou art fair!" Thus does the heavenly Spouse address the soul to which it is wedded by grace. The title of Christian or Catholic does not make us friends of God, but the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in our souls by grace alone makes us His friends. The early pastors of the Church called the faithful "just," "the saints," not because theirs was a heroic virtue and sanctity, but because in them Christ did really abide in holy joy and peace and friendship, as once He did visibly in the house of Zacheus. "This day I must abide in thy house. And he (Zacheus) made haste and came down and received him with joy." The friends of God are the truly faithful, in whom sin is not, but the love of God by grace. And, therefore, it was that, when one came to Him and begged to be admitted to His intimacy, he was bidden to "go first, be reconciled to thy brother, and then come to me." There is no beauty in death; men have a horror for the grave and the trappings of mourning. So there is no attraction for God in the soul that, deprived of spiritual life, is steeped in the death of sin. Such a soul is repulsive to God. Grace alone gives us the peace and joy of the Lord.

It is plain what grace does to the soul in order to make it beautiful in the sight of the Maker. "I will pour upon you

clean water," says Ezechiel, "and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness." When the hideousness of sin is removed, the soul is justified; it is sanctified, when it is adorned and clothed in the garb of primitive innocence, according as holy David speaks: "Thou shalt wash me, and I shall be made whiter than the snow." Thus, with the quickening of the soul by the fire of the Holy Ghost, all malice is expelled and that warmth enkindled which is love and affection. By means of the supernatural vitality imparted to the soul there is brought out, in all its divine effulgence and beauty, the image and likeness of the Creator which sin had defaced. There remains not a stain or blotch or trace of sin, which is ugliness; but that charm of purity, that fair loveliness, that sweet innocence, which charm the eye of God, which make the soul resemble the Son of Man " in whom he was well pleased."

"And God saw all things that he had made, and they were very good." Of course. Whatever is from God and, in any sense, of God, is precious in His sight. He had created life, and many were the varieties thereof. There was the plant, the tree; they live, grow, develop, put forth leaf and bud and blossom and fruit, and multiply after their kind. To such there is a charm and beauty which, in a human sense, we call "grace": "Consider the lilies of the field. . . . Not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed like one of these." And then He beheld ranging over meadow and plain those noble shapes, instinct with animal life, which see and hear and feel and move and know pain and pleasure. We speak of the "grace" of their carriage, movements and activity. And they, too, pleased the eye of God. And then came man, the king of all creation, sharing with the lower beings the vegetative and animal life, but crowned with that still higher perfection of thought, of intelligence, of self-government and free choice. And God seeing all the things that He had made, found that this was the noblest, the most excellent, the best. And how infinitely more precious in His sight must man be, if his soul, instinct by grace, lives a divine life, like unto that whereby God himself lives, if he is become His son and child, if in him the Maker beholds as in a mirror His own image and likeness!

And why? Doubtless for the same reason that a man may be pleased with a flower, fond of a pet animal, love even a child that is a stranger to him; but all this is nothing as compared with the affection which he bears to his own child. And why should not a father gaze with fondness and love on the child which is his own flesh and blood, a being endowed with the same life as himself, which he himself gave? Why should not a father's child be more dear to him than the child of another? Just so does God love His own; just so, in His children by grace does His eye take greatest delight. That creature He loves with a love that no human parent has ever felt for his offspring. It becomes, in the language of Holy Scripture, "as the apple of his eye." And hence it is that the grace of God and the friendship of God are terms used by us indifferently to mean one and the same thing. When we say, for example, that the Sacraments give or increase grace in us, give life to the soul or strengthen it, unite us with God or deepen that union, these are several ways of expressing the same marvel of God's dealing with men.

SANCTIFYING GRACE IS THE SEED OF GLORY

But sanctifying grace is something more than a state of new being and of favor in the sight of God; it is a new energy which gives a supernatural quality to works which we perform. Every being acts and produces according to its nature. The branch can yield fruit only by that virtue which is brought to it from the parent trunk. Good fruit is the product of a good tree; the bad tree can bring forth naught but what is bad. Now, "I am the vine," said the Lord, "and you are the branches. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in me" by grace. Among the works of man there are those which he performs unassisted by heaven; these springing from the natural man alone, are natural works and are deserving merely of a natural reward, such as this world offers. Others are sinful works; and these are "fruit unto death." But he who accomplishes good, while instinct with that supernatural virtue

which is communicated to the soul, labors supernaturally and will reap a supernatural reward. And this is "bringing forth fruit unto God"; this is acting "according to God." When St. Paul in vision heard Christ's consoling word, "My grace is sufficient to thee," it was an answer to the query of the disciples of the Lord who asked: "What shall we do that we may work the works of God?" For it is they who are just and holy by reason of the spirit dwelling within them, and they alone, that perform holy works and are in a position to deserve consideration from God for all that they do.

Out on the lake Peter toiled on in the darkness. With might and main he labored, dragging the waters with his net, while the hours passed and night spent itself on his fruitless task. Morning came, and Peter uttered his complaint: "Master, we have labored all the night and have taken nothing." No wonder. He worked not under the eye of the Master; Christ was not with him. Peter striving alone in the night unsuccessfully is a perfect image of the soul exerting itself for heaven without the presence and light and strength of God by grace; its works have no price, they are not stamped with the seal of the supernatural. But when the Lord came, and Peter at His command let down the net on the right side, great was his astonishment at the multitude of fishes the net inclosed. Then it was day, then Christ was nigh, then did he know on which side to cast, then were his strong arms nerved and steadied for a haul such as he had never dared hope for. Let, then, the sinner labor and struggle as he will; "If I have not charity," says the Apostle, "it profiteth me nothing." The source of all our merit for heaven is the grace of God which is infused into our souls by the Holy Ghost.

This does not mean, of course, that He abandons to their fate sinners, that is, those who by unrepented sin are not united with Him and live not in His friendship, and who therefore can in no manner make an advance toward Him. It means that, while remaining enemies of God and dead to Him, no work proceeding from them has value directly unto salvation. But through God's great mercy, they may perform actions naturally and morally good; and in response to these, actual

grace may be vouchsafed to them, and thereby the means afforded of rising out of their sinful state and acquiring a supernatural standing with God. The beggar starving by the wayside will die if no one assist him. But if a good Samaritan lifts him up and cares for him and heals his wounds, and, setting him on his feet, gives him the wherewith to start in life anew, the reclaimed unfortunate may one day become a millionaire. In like manner is God willing to give back life to the spiritually dead and restore the health and strength forfeited by sin, in mercy to those who deserve not and cannot deserve it. But until this transformation is effected by a communication of sanctifying grace salvation is impossible, heaven is inaccessible, chaos yawns between Creator and creature. As says holy Job: "If he withhold the waters, all things shall be dried up."

And this is why grace is called the "fountain of water springing into life everlasting." It is the heavenly seed sown in us, the germ of immortality. It is the power which alone makes spiritual success possible.

CONCLUSION

What a priceless treasure, then, is this gift of sanctifying grace! What a masterpiece of God's almighty power is the soul that is alive with it! What a supremely noble being is man thus informed! We are now what we one day shall be in the glorious felicity of our lasting home; for grace and glory are but two modes of the same life, the one for time, the other for eternity. True, this glory hath not yet appeared to us who are still imprisoned in the flesh. But "dearly beloved," says St. John, "we are the sons of God; and it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when he shall appear we shall be like to him, because we shall see him as he is." We now see only through the mirror of faith; later when the clear vision shall dawn upon us, the reality will be the same. Then God will come and abide in us, and we in Him, even as He now does by His holy Spirit, but in an invisible manner. Let only God dwell in our souls during this life, and we shall continue to abide therein endlessly in the life to come. If we would be His

friends hereafter, it behooves us to be His friends here below. And the measure of our assurance of that bliss will be the measure in which we shall have realized in us, in the midst of the temptations and evil of this world, the truth which St. Paul spoke of himself: "And I live, now not I, but Christ liveth in me."

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NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

MARRIAGE AND THE LAWS OF THE CHURCH

TEXT

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son.—Matt. xxii. 2.

Analysis

Introduction. The parable of to-day's Gospel shows us that from ancient times marriages have been attended by the observance of great festivities and numerous ceremonial customs. And not only in the parables of our Lord, but in many other passages of Holy Scripture, as well as profane writers, are we told of these nuptial observances and of the sanctity in which they were held by all peoples. Hence we can understand the

action of the king who, rather than forego the customary wedding banquet, called in all sorts of persons to be his guests. Likewise we understand the king's indignation at the sight in his banquet hall of one who had violated the proprieties by appearing in a dress unsuited to the occasion.

If we should be inclined to think the king in to-day's parable over-exacting and too severe in matters of mere form and custom, let us reflect that in our own times there is hardly less insistence on similar points of social usage and etiquette, and that many people seem to think, when contracting marriage, their most serious duties are to issue invitations, have their gowns selected and cut according to the latest decree of fashion, and provide a sumptuous banquet for their guests. While it is perfectly right and laudable to observe within the bounds of moderation the laws that govern polite society, it is not less, but rather more important that the faithful should be zealous for the observance of the laws of the Church which safeguard the sacred character of marriage. Let us therefore briefly consider what the Church requires of us in this matter; for the Church being the custodian of the Sacraments has the power and the right to make laws concerning them which oblige in conscience and before God.

I. **What the Church requires before marriage is contracted.** 1. The parties to be married should first go to the pastor of the parish in which they reside and make known their intention of contracting marriage. If both do not reside in the same parish, they should go to the bride's pastor who, according to law, has the first right to officiate at the marriage. This visit to the priest should be made several weeks before the date set for the marriage. 2. When calling on the pastor the parties should not fail to bring with them certificates of their Baptism, or should be able in some way to show that they have been baptized. 3. Even though the parties have been baptized there may be other reasons that would impede their marriage according to the law of the Church. To discover whether or not any

impediments exist, and to remove them, if possible, is the purpose of this visit to the priest. 4. The nullifying impediments of marriage are: (a) lack of proper age; (b) certain physical defects; (c) the bond of a previous marriage (exceptions to this are the Pauline Privilege and the dissolution of a non-consummated marriage by solemn profession in a religious Order, or by Papal dispensation); (d) disparity of worship; (e) Holy Orders; (f) solemn vows; (g) abduction; (h) crime; (i) blood relationship to all in the direct line, and to the third degree in the collateral line; (j) affinity or relationship through marriage to all in the direct line, and to the second degree in the collateral line; (k) public decorum; (l) spiritual relationship, which exists between a baptized person and the one who baptized him or stood for him in Baptism; (m) legal adoption wherever it is an impediment under the civil law. 5. Besides the above mentioned impediments there are certain ones which, though they do not nullify marriage, yet render it unlawful, namely, (a) certain simple vows; (b) legal adoption whenever it is a prohibitory impediment under the civil law; (c) mixed marriages. The Church also forbids marriage with fallen-away Catholics, public sinners, excommunicated persons, etc. 6. Mixed marriages are allowed by the Church only for weighty reasons, and when sufficient safeguards are given in behalf of the Catholic party and the religion of the children. 7. Before marriage can be celebrated the Church law requires that the banns be published, unless for a good reason they are dispensed with by the Bishop. 8. Impediments to marriage that have been established by the Church can also be dispensed by the same authority. 9. Before marriage the parties should be instructed in the duties of the married state, and should go to confession.

II. **What the Church requires in the cele ration of marriage.** 1. In order that a marriage may be valid it is necessary, (a) that it be contracted in the presence of the parish priest of the place, or of another authorized priest, and of two witnesses;

(b) that there exist no substantial error, force, or grave fear to nullify the consent given by the parties. 2. The Church earnestly desires that all the faithful should contract marriage not at night, but at a nuptial Mass, and that they receive Holy Communion and the nuptial blessing. If the nuptial blessing is not received at the time of marriage, it should be received later. 3. Marriage can be celebrated at any time during the year, but the nuptial Mass and blessing are not allowed during Lent and Advent, without the special permission of the Bishop.

EXHORTATION. 1. Marriage is not merely a civil contract and occasion of social rejoicing, but is a Sacrament; and as such it should be celebrated in a manner befitting its sacred character. Especially out of place are unbecoming amusements and dissipations. 2. In order to obtain the blessings of married life the state of matrimony should be entered into with devout sentiments and feelings of respect and reverence for the Church's laws concerning it.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part II

THE FORMALITIES OF MARRIAGE

RITES OBSERVED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF MARRIAGE

Having explained these matters (the duties of married people), the pastor will next proceed to instruct his people in the rites to be observed in the administration of marriage. There is no need, however, that we dwell on these questions here. The Council of Trent has laid down fully and accurately what must be chiefly observed; and this decree will not be unknown to the pastor. It will suffice, then, to admonish him to study to make himself acquainted, from the doctrine of the Council, with what regards this subject, and to explain it carefully to the faithful.[1]

CLANDESTINITY

But above all, lest young persons, whose period of life is marked by extreme indiscretion, should be deceived by a

[1] Sess. 24. decret. de reformat. matrimon.

merely nominal marriage and rush into hasty engagements, the result of criminal passion, the pastor cannot too frequently remind them that there can be no true and valid marriage unless it be contracted in the presence of the parish priest, or of some other priest commissioned by him or by the Ordinary, and that of a certain number of witnesses.

THE IMPEDIMENTS OF MARRIAGE

The impediments of marriage are also to be explained, a subject so minutely and accurately treated by many grave and learned writers on the virtues and vices, as to render it an easy task for the pastor to draw upon their labors, particularly as he has occasion to have such works continually in his hands. The instructions, therefore, which such books contain, and also the decrees of the Council with regard to the impediments arising from "spiritual affinity," from "the justice of public honesty," and from "fornication," the pastor will peruse with attention and expound with care.

THE DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH THE SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE IS TO BE APPROACHED

The faithful may hence learn the dispositions with which they should approach the Sacrament of Marriage. They should consider that they are about to enter upon a work that is not human but divine. The example of the Fathers of the Old Law, who esteemed marriage as a most holy and religious rite, although it had not then been raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, shows the singular purity of soul and sentiments of piety with which Christians should approach marriage.

CONSENT OF PARENTS

Among other things, the pastor should exhort children that they owe as a tribute of respect to their parents, or to those under whose guardianship and authority they are placed, not to engage in marriage without their knowledge, still less in defiance of their express wishes. In the Old Law children

were always given in marriage by their parents; and that the will of the parent is always to have very great influence on the choice of the child, is clear from these words of the Apostle: "He that giveth his virgin in marriage doth well; and he that giveth her not, doth better." [2]

THE USE OF MARRIAGE

Finally, the use of marriage is a subject which the pastor will approach with becoming delicacy, avoiding the use of any expression that may be unfit to meet the ears of the faithful, that may be calculated to offend the piety of some, or excite the laughter of others. "The words of the Lord are chaste words;" [3] and the teachers of a Christian people should make use of no language that is not characterized by singular gravity, and that does not breathe purity of soul. Two lessons of instruction are, then, to be specially insisted upon.

The first is that marriage is not to be sought from motives of lust or sensuality, but that its use is to be restrained within those limits, which, as we have already shown, are fixed by God. The faithful should be mindful of the exhortation of the Apostle: "They that have wives, let them be as though they had them not." [4] The words of St. Jerome are also worthy of attention: "The love which a wise man cherishes towards his wife is the result of judgment, not the impulse of passion; he governs the impetuosity of desire, and is not hurried into indulgence. There is nothing more shameful than that a husband should love his wife as an adultress." [5]

But as every blessing is to be obtained from God by holy prayer, the faithful are also to be taught sometimes to abstain from the marriage debt, in order to devote themselves to prayer. This religious continence, according to the pious injunction of our predecessors in the faith, is particularly to be observed for at least three days previous to Communion, and oftener during the solemn and penitential season of Lent.

[2] 1 Cor. vii. 38.
[3] Ps. xi. 7.
[4] 1 Cor. vii. 29.
[5] Lib. 1. contra Iovian. in fine.

Thus will the faithful experience the blessings of the holy state of marriage by a constantly increasing accumulation of divine grace; and living in the pursuit and practice of piety, they will not only spend this mortal life in peace and tranquillity, but will also repose in the true and firm hope, "which confoundeth not," [6] of arriving one day, through the divine goodness, at the fruition of that life which is eternal.[7]

Sermons

The Marriage Laws of the Church

BY THE REV. STANISLAUS WOYWOD, O.F.M.

The kingdom of heaven is likened to a king, who made a marriage for his son.—Matt. xxii. 2.

THE SUBLIME CHARACTER OF MARRIAGE

As soon as the Lord God had finished the work of creating this world and had fitted it out with most beautiful and useful creatures, He called mankind into existence to give over to them this earth like a well-furnished house which a kind father has prepared for his beloved child. God who created the first man and woman and endowed them with a soul made after the likeness of His own Divine Spirit loved these human beings with the affection of a most tender father. He Himself introduced Eve to Adam and joined them in that inseparable union of the marriage bond which fuses two lives into one inseparable and intimate companionship for the purpose of raising children who are destined to become children of God.

Parenthood, so sublime and so divine in its purpose, proves the great sanctity of the marriage tie. For this reason God Himself established the first two safeguards of marriage, its *unity* and its *indissolubility:* Unity in contradistinction to polygamy, and indissolubility in opposition to divorce. Though in the course of

[6] Rom. v. 5.

[7] See 33. q. 4. throughout; de consecr. dist. 2. cap. omnis homo; Jerome, in Apol. pro libris contra Iovian. after the middle; in c. 12. Zach. on the words: "In de planctus magnus erit fructus thori immaculati."

ages these principles had come to be almost forgotten in the world, Christ the Saviour came and restored marriage to its primitive sanctity, and raised the marriage contract of Christians to the dignity of a Sacrament.

If the sacred state of marriage is to be entered into in a worthy manner, the people who intend to get married must (1) take God into counsel; (2) invite Jesus to their marriage; (3) make the sacred contract according to the laws of the Church.

I. TAKE GOD INTO COUNSEL

1. Young men and young ladies should, before they ever keep company, pray to God for guidance that they may be enlightened by Him so that they may not seek sensual satisfaction and pleasure in marriage without regard to God's law and the purpose for which God sanctioned the marriage state; that they may not be misled by the world and worldly motives in the choice of a partner. The world regards only the exterior appearance of beauty, or wealth, or social standing, or whatever other purely human considerations there may be. Young people must pray, and pray fervently and perseveringly, that they may not keep company with anyone whose character and conduct is such that he or she may be an occasion of grievous sin to them. A life of sin would be a horrible preparation for the sacred state of marriage.

2. Though youth is not inclined by nature to take life seriously, it would be a great mistake to excuse young people who are preparing for marriage from the grave obligation of considering well what they are about to do. Christian marriage is an important state, first because the Christian family has for its purpose to raise children and to educate them in such manner that they may be a credit both to human society and to the Church. Moreover, if the foundation and the government of a nation or State is a difficult problem, the right ordering of a family is also difficult and important; for the family lies at the very base of a State; it is the unit from which both Church and State are formed. Society as a whole will be like its units.

3. The essential duties of married life require that God be taken into counsel before marriage; for the faithful and constant fulfillment of these duties is above human strength. The first and most obvious obligation of living together in a life-long companionship of a most intimate character demands that their qualities of heart and soul be the very best. It is all important that both parties do their utmost to be truly united in the spirit of faith and religion; that neither party live for self, but for the other, in a holy unselfishness which is possible only through the grace of God.

4. Again, to overcome the temptations and bear the trials of married life, God must be taken into counsel. There is the infidel world tempting to race-suicide and to pleasure, regardless of the very purpose of marriage, so that this sacred state is used only as a means to hide sin. There is the tempter to unfaithfulness in spite of the solemn promise which the parties made in the name of God when they pledged themselves to each other. The daily history of crime proves only too plainly that there is no other safeguard against sin than God's grace and that the forbidden fruit offers a strong temptation to the heart of poor mortals. There are trials of sickness and misfortune, there are many sources of discord and dissatisfaction which no human being will at all times bear as God wants us to bear them, unless His grace and His strength be with us. There are the many sacrifices that the raising and proper care and education of the children demand. Here again God's help is needed.

All young people who think of marriage should heed the solemn warning which God gives in the book of Tobias (vi. 16, 17): "Hear me and I will shew thee who they are, over whom the devil can prevail. For they who in such manner receive matrimony, as to shut out God from themselves, and from their mind, and to give themselves to their lust, as the horse and the mule, which have not understanding, over them the devil hath power."

II. JESUS MUST BE AT THE MARRIAGE, IF IT IS TO BE A HAPPY ONE

1. In a pure conscience. The Apostle, St. Paul (1 Cor. iii. 17) says: "The temple of God is holy, which you are." And again: "Know you not that your members are the temple of the Holy Ghost who is in you, whom you have from God; and you are not your own? For you are bought with a great price. Glorify and bear God in your body" (1 Cor. vi. 19). Again the same Apostle (Heb. xiii. 4) says: "Marriage is honorable in all." Jesus who deigned to be present at the marriage of Cana in Galilee raised this important institution to the dignity of a Sacrament. Those, therefore, who are about to enter into this sacred state must prepare themselves by purity of heart and mind. They must control and restrain themselves from sin during the time of courtship, for a life of sin previous to marriage would be a weak foundation on which to build one of the most important institutions of life. Young people must carefully avoid being a scandal and a source of sin to each other. They should not meet with sinful intention but should rather encourage each other in the practice of virtue and true Christian restraint. To strengthen themselves against possible weakness, the Church invites them to receive the Sacraments frequently and reverently. Thus they may merit great blessings from God for their future marriage.

2. In a pure intention. The prayer of Tobias should express the mind of all Christian people who intend to marry: "Lord, thou knowest, that not for fleshly lust do I take my sister (she was a relation of Tobias) to wife, but only for the love of posterity, in which thy name may be blessed for ever and ever" (Tob. viii. 9). Yes, the Catholic should remember the words of the Holy Bible: "We are children of saints and we must not be joined together like heathens that know not God" (Tob. viii. 5). A great deal depends on the purity of intention with which young people enter into marriage, for in the first place God sees the innermost thoughts of our mind, and in the second place, purely worldly motives are neither strong enough nor of sufficient endurance to keep two persons united in a manner demanded by a Christian marriage. Only when

both parties are resolved to have God's interests and the welfare of their own souls at heart first and foremost, can Christian marriage be what it ought to be.

3. Purity of body and soul are required, if Christ is to be present at the marriage. How elaborate are the worldly preparations in many marriages. Clothes and finery and all other worldly affairs are thought of and prepared a long time before the marriage. There is no objection to making this great day of one's life a solemn occasion; but while the outward preparations are made with great care, should not the interior preparation of heart and soul receive still more attention? Guests are invited; but would it not be sad if the greatest of all guests and the only one whose presence is essential to true happiness were neglected or thought of only at the last minute?

The immediate preparation for marriage consists in a good confession the day before the marriage and in a worthy Holy Communion on the day itself. Yes, the Christian partners to a marriage are first to be united through Christ in a spiritual union, which is to be the basis for the union brought about by the sacred contract of marriage. Christian marriage is a symbol of the union of Christ with His Church; and in consequence of this most sacred character of marriage the Christian couple ought to have the greatest possible respect for the duties and responsibilities of the sacred state.

Let these thoughts be an inspiration to a devout understanding of the holiness of this union. Besides proper regard for the sacredness of marriage, it is necessary to know and observe the laws which the Church has made for the protection of this great contract. Chief among these laws are those that refer to the inpediments of marriage.

III. THE LAWS OF THE CHURCH MUST BE OBSERVED

To St. Peter and the other Apostles the Saviour committed His Church, and to them He gave all power in matters that appertain to our spiritual life, which power is the same as the Heavenly Father had given to Him. The Church, therefore,

rightfully claims power over the marriage contract of Christians, for it is that very contract which Christ raised to the dignity of a Sacrament, so that the marriage contract of Christians cannot be separated from the Sacrament.

In order that this sacred contract may be entered into in a manner becoming the dignity of the Sacrament, the Church has established certain impediments to marriage. These we shall now consider.

1. *Impediment of Age*

In the first place, the minimum age at which the Church allows young people to contract marriage is the completed fourteenth year for girls and the completed sixteenth year for boys. Before that age the Church does not recognize any marriage. In fact, she does not desire young people to make such an important contract until they are of more mature age and judgment, wherefore she admonishes the pastors of parishes to dissuade them from marrying at an earlier age than that which the good and intelligent people of a country commonly hold to be the proper age. The customs of countries do, of course, vary in this matter.

2. *Impediments of Relationship by Blood and by Marriage.*

Again, the Church does not consider marriage between near blood relations proper, and science confirms the prudence of the judgment of the Church; for it is commonly admitted by men of science that marriage between near relations is often dangerous to the life and health of the offspring. The Church, therefore, rules that the blood relations within three degrees or generations cannot intermarry. When, therefore, two young people have the same grandfather or grandmother (second degree), or the same great grandfather or great grandmother (third degree), they are debarred from marrying each other. A dispensation is at times granted by the Church for second cousins (third degree), and also for first cousins (second degree), but there must be special reasons, and the nearer the relationship the more urgent the reasons must be. There is

no human law which does not admit of exceptions for proportionate good reasons, but exceptions prove the rule.

Relationship by marriage is considered by the Church as sacred as the tie of blood; hence she does not recognize marriage within the first two degrees with the kindred of a deceased wife's blood relations and vice versa. It is perfectly in harmony with nature that the person marrying into a family enters into a close relation to the blood relations of the family of wife or husband, and it is therefore not becoming that after the death of the married party he marry a near kin of the deceased partner. As the relationship by marriage is not as close as that by blood, the prohibition of the Church extends only to the first and second degree relations, for instance, the sister of the deceased wife (first degree), or a first cousin of the deceased wife (second degree). Also from this impediment a dispensation may be granted by the Church for serious reasons.

3. *Free Consent*

The Church has always been a watchful custodian of human rights and liberty and she wishes the contracting parties to be entirely free in entering upon the sacred contract of marriage. If, therefore, one or both parties are forced into a marriage through undue influence of the parents or anyone else, the Church does not recognize such a marriage. Though the Church teaches children to obey and respect their parents, still in the choice of a partner for life the Church desires them to be free and independent. This law does not authorize young people to disregard the reasonable objections that a father or mother may have, and a conscientious young person who expects God's blessing on his marriage will not ignore the reasonable objections of his parents. All force or violence or other undue interference with the liberty of free choice renders a marriage null and void. If a person has induced another party to sin, especially when this is done with a promise of marriage, there may be no other way of satisfying for the wrong done than by marriage; and if it can be proved that one

party has wronged the other, priest and parents would have a right to urge the marriage, but to force it by appealing to the court is not prudent, for often such a marriage works more harm than good.

4. *Mixed Marriages, Marriages with the Unbaptized*

The Church has for several centuries past warned her children in the most solemn words, beseeching them for the sake of their immortal souls, not to marry non-Catholics, whether baptized or unbaptized. The gift of faith and the grace to belong to the true Church of Christ are such great blessings that the person who knows how to value God's gifts fully, realizes the great importance of safeguarding such a treasure, for as the Saviour says: "What does it profit man, if he gain the whole world but suffer the loss of his soul."

Catholic young people who marry non-Catholics certainly do expose themselves to the danger of losing the faith, for if the non-Catholic is opposed to the practice of religion and to a married life according to God's law as explained by the Church, the Catholic party may be forced either to live against his faith, or else continually to fight for freedom of worship. The question of the Catholic education of the children is beset with even more difficulties. It suffices just to mention these facts, for experience proves that as a general rule marriages between Catholics and non-Catholics are unhappy unions.

If the Church cannot dissuade Catholics from marrying non-Catholics, she will reluctantly give permission for such a marriage, but only under condition that the non-Catholic party gives in writing the solemn promise that he or she will not interfere with the free practice of the faith of the Catholic party and not induce him or her to sin against the sacred obligation of the married state, and that all the children God may give them will be baptized in the Catholic Church and raised as Catholics. This is God's law, not merely a law of the Church, for a Catholic cannot enter into a union in which he is not able to do his duties towards God. There is no dispensation possible from these conditions, and if the non-

Catholic does not agree to them, the Church will not have anything to do with that marriage and no Catholic priest will marry such parties. If the unfortunate Catholic prefers human love and human comfort to God's law and gets married outside the Church, he cuts himself off from the Church by his own choice.

5. *Banns. Pastor as Authorized Witness of Marriage*

Church and State alike consider the married state of such great importance for the well being of human society that all civilized nations forbid free love, and have their laws as to the legal form of this most important of all human contracts. Wherefore, when people inform the pastor of their intention of getting married, the Church demands that the names of the parties intending marriage be announced in church at Holy Mass on three successive Sundays (or holy days of obligation) and Catholic people who hear the announcement are strictly obliged by the law of the Church to inform the pastor, if they know of any legal obstacle to the marriage, for instance, that one party is divorced, or that the parties are blood relations, etc.

Finally, after the announcements have been duly made, or a dispensation has been obtained from the Bishop in a special case to omit the announcements, the parties must present themselves with two witnesses (after having obtained the marriage license) to the pastor of the parish where the young lady lives. If there are special reasons why the parties wish to marry in the parish of the young man, they must make the reason known to the pastor, who will decide whether those reasons are sufficient to have the marriage in his parish.

The Church desires very much that the parties should get married at Holy Mass, and that they receive the special marriage blessing, which can be given only at Holy Mass.

If one of the parties is a non-Catholic and the Bishop has given permission for the marriage, the banns are not announced and the marriage ceremony is not to be held in church, but in the pastor's residence.

The assistance of the pastor as the official witness to the marriage contract is of such importance that the Church does not recognize a marriage of Catholics, even though one only is a Catholic, if the pastor or another priest duly authorized did not assist. If, therefore, careless Catholics spurn the law of the Church and get married before a non-Catholic minister or a civil officer, the Church does not recognize the marriage, and the Catholic cuts himself off from the Church. If he again wishes to be admitted to the Sacraments, the marriage must be made over again in the presence of the pastor. Formerly the Church in the United States and in many other countries recognized the marriage outside the Church as valid, though pronouncing it gravely sinful, but on account of much abuse the law was passed in 1908 that such marriages would be considered null and void by the Church.

CONCLUSION

You have now understood the true meaning of a Christian marriage. You know that God must be taken into counsel, for the Saviour says that without Him we can do nothing. It would be presumptious to take upon oneself the important duties of this sacred state without consulting God. It would likewise be wrong not to invite Jesus to the Christian marriage, but He cannot be invited unless the parties prepare themselves in purity of conscience, in purity of intention, and in purity of body and soul long before the marriage, so as to be worthy of the honor of Christ's presence. Think often, when the world and the flesh tempt you, of the words of Christ, that it profits you nothing if you should gain the whole world but suffer the loss of your souls. Finally, the Saviour has given us the Church as our guide in the ways of God. Wherefore, the Catholic who aims to please God will respect the laws of the Church, especially in an affair so important as the sacred contract of marriage. God's blessing is upon those who, with a good and perfect heart, listen to His word and do His will with unswerving loyalty.

The Sacrament of Matrimony

BY THE REV. CHARLES COPPENS, S.J.

This is a great sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the church. —Eph. v. 32.

INTRODUCTION

By dear brethren: We have treated several times before of the Sacrament of Matrimony, taking each time a different view of this important subject. To-day we will consider it in its liturgical aspect; that is, we will study the Church ceremonies which are used both to give validity and add dignity to the celebration of the Sacrament, and to explain to the faithful the full significance of this sacred rite.

BANNS

The first step taken in our churches in this matter is the proclamation of the banns. That is, the intended marriage is to be announced at high Mass on three successive Sundays or festivals, in the parish churches of both the bridegroom and the bride. All the faithful are thereby commanded to make known to the pastor any impediment they may know of which would be a hindrance to the intended marriage.

The purpose of the banns is to protect the honor and other interests of the Church and of the faithful. For it would disgrace the Church if one of her pastors would assist at a marriage forbidden by her laws; and it would be a sad misfortune for the two spouses, if, after they have been publicly married, it were then discovered that the contract was invalid, and they would have to separate from each other. Sometimes ill-instructed persons are ashamed of having their banns proclaimed. They should, on the contrary, be proud of it, for it means that the union is an honorable one, to which no objection is known.

THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

We will next explain the marriage ceremony itself. The pastor, or another priest acting in his place, enters the sanctuary wearing a surplice and a white stole, the white color

denoting that matrimony is in the eyes of the Church a joyous celebration. The validity of the contract requires also the presence of two witnesses, and, of course, the bridegroom and the bride should, in all propriety, be attended by their relatives and friends. The priest begins by interrogating each of the contracting parties separately about their consent to the marriage. First he asks the bridegroom: "Wilt thou take the bride here present [mentioning by name], for thy lawful wife, according to the rite of our holy Mother, the Church?" After he has received the answer, "I will," the priest similarly interrogates the bride, "Wilt thou take the bridegroom here present for thy lawful husband, according to the rite of our holy Mother, the Church?" The assent must be expressed by either in the words "I will."

You notice, my dear brethren, that holy Church, at the very opening of the ceremony, requires from each party a clear statement that there is true and free consent to the union which is about to take place. This condition is absolutely necessary, for marriage is a mutual contract, and contracts are not binding unless they proceed from the real and free consent of the contracting parties. Besides, to protect the right of her children, the Church has made a strict law that if either party to the marriage would give only a pretended and no real consent, or would not consent freely but only through grievous fear of unjust compulsion, there shall be no valid marriage at all.

When the deliberate consent of both has thus been publicly declared, the moment has arrived to enter on the solemn compact. The ceremony is very impressive, and clearly significant of the irrevocable binding force of the marital contract. For the priest now bids the bridegroom and the bride to hold each other's right hand, and in this position to pronounce the formula which ancient usage has consecrated to that purpose. First the bridegroom and next the bride pronounces the words: "I take thee for my lawful wife (or husband), to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, till death do us part." The words used emphatically express the absolute prohibition of divorce, "till death do us part."

The contract is now completed, and the contract constitutes the Sacrament for Christians. The priest proceeds to confirm and bless it, saying, "I join you in Matrimony, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." And, saying this, he makes over the married couple the holy Sign of the Cross.

The Sacrament of Matrimony must be received in the state of grace; to receive it in sin would be a sacrilege. If received in the proper dispositions, it confers on the recipients not only a present increase of holiness, as every Sacrament does, but also for future needs a rich supply of actual graces, which will greatly lighten the burdens of the married state and conduce to the attainment of the purposes of such union, chiefly the mutual help of husband and wife in life's difficulties and the proper raising of a happy family of children.

The next ceremony is the blessing of the nuptial ring. Unlike a bar, which has its two extremities pointing in opposite directions, a ring betokens a close bond of union, and is thus an appropriate emblem of the union of two persons into one. To signify that this union is holy, the priest pronounces over the ring an appointed blessing, saying: "Our help is in the name of the Lord, who created heaven and earth. Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto thee. The Lord be with you, and with thy spirit. Let us pray. 'Bless, O Lord, this ring, which we bless in Thy name, that she who shall wear it, observing inviolate fidelity to her spouse, may dwell in peace and in Thy will, and may ever live in mutual charity, through Christ our Lord. Amen.'"

Then the priest blesses the ring with holy water in the form of the Cross; and the bridegroom, accepting it from the priest's hand, puts it on the ring-finger of his partner's left hand, saying: "With this ring I thee wed, and I plight unto thee my troth." And the priest, blessing them, adds. "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, confirm, O God, what thou hast worked in our midst, from Thy holy temple, which is in Jerusalem.

"Lord, have mercy on us; Christ, have mercy on us; Lord, have mercy on us." Then he recites the "Our Father," and

continues thus: "Save thy servants, Lord, who hope in Thee; send them help from Thy holy place, and from Sion protect them; be to them a tower of strength against the face of the enemy. Lord, hear my prayer, and let my cry come unto Thee. The Lord be with you, and with thy spirit. Let us pray. Look down, we beseech Thee, O Lord, upon these Thy servants, and benignly assist the ordinances which Thou hast instituted for the increase of the human race; that those whom Thy will hath united may be preserved by Thy help, through Christ, our Lord."

The sacramental contract is now completed, and copious benedictions have been invoked upon the bridegroom and bride, such as are signified by the sacred ceremonies performed and by the prayers offered to God. But the ritual bids us remark that none of those solemn rites, none of those formal benedictions are to be used at mixed marriages, that is, when one of the parties is not a Catholic; nor are the surplice and stole then to be worn, nor is the marriage to be performed in the church. Such unions are no cause of joy, but of sadness to holy Mother, the Church, because they are a source of grievous evils. She may give a reluctant consent to them to avoid worse consequences, which would follow if her minister were not present at the contract. But she grieves over them, and, to express her mourning, she bids her minister perform merely what is necessary for the validity of the contract, and omit every religious rite.

THE NUPTIAL MASS

The next liturgical function of a Catholic marriage, my brethren, is the holy Mass, read or sung for the welfare of the bridegroom and the bride. We read in Holy Scripture that Christ designed to assist in person at the marriage feast of Cana. Would it not be an exceeding honor and happiness if, in His infinite condescension, He would similarly honor by His personal presence the marriages of His followers at the present day? It looks at first sight as if this were an extravagant wish, the very expression of which is presumption on the part of

poor sinful man. And yet, my brethren, that is just what our beneficent Lord wishes to do, and holy Church urges us to accept His merciful invitation. For this purpose it is her desire that the performance of the marriage should be followed by the holy Sacrifice of the Mass, which is to be offered for the welfare of the married couple. During Mass Christ is as truly present as He was in the midst of the guests at the marriage feast of Cana. As there He changed the water into wine, so here, on this occasion, He transforms the natural love of two human hearts into the supernatural charity of the children of God. It is the ardent wish of holy Church that the Catholic marriage should be followed by the holy Sacrifice of the Mass; hence, I wish next to explain what is peculiar to this celebration.

The solemnization of Matrimony properly consists in the nuptial benediction which is given, and can only be given, during the Mass specially appointed for this purpose, and which is called in the missal "the Mass for Bridegroom and Bride." The Church is very desirous that all the married faithful should receive this nuptial benediction; so that, if any did not receive it on the day of their marriage, she urges them to do so on some later day. The only exception is the case of a widow who marries again; she cannot receive this nuptial blessing at her new marriage if she received it on a former occasion. But for those who have never yet received the nuptial blessing, it is always possible, provided both parties are alive, to have this Mass read or sung and the nuptial blessing pronounced. During this Mass the bridegroom and bride are kneeling before the altar. The priest, after the usual prayers at the foot of the altar, ascends and goes to the Missal at the Epistle side, where he says the following Introit: "May the Lord of Israel join you together, and may He be with you; and now, O Lord, make them bless Thee more fully. Blessed are they that fear the Lord, that walk in His ways." The Collect is next read or sung: "Graciously hear us, almighty and merciful God, that what is performed by our ministry may be abundantly filled with Thy blessing, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, Thy Son, who liveth and reigneth with Thee in the unity of the

Holy Ghost, world without end. Amen." The Epistle of the nuptial Mass is taken from the fifth chapter of St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, verses 22 to 33, in which we find these sublime thoughts: "Husbands, love your wives as Christ also loves the Church, and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life; that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having a spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish. For this cause shall man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they shall be two in one flesh. This is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church."

You notice, my brethren, that St. Paul compares the marital union of bridegroom and bride to the union of Christ with His Church; and therefore he says that the husband must love his wife as Christ loved the Church, and sacrificed Himself for it; and as the Church is loving and obedient to Christ, so must the wife be loving and obedient to her husband, who is in place of Christ. See to what exalted dignity this explanation raises the Sacrament of Matrimony.

After the Epistle follows the Gradual, which is so very beautiful. It says: "Behold, thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord. May the Lord bless thee out of Sion; and mayest thou see the good things of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. And mayest thou see thy children's children; peace upon Israel." Later on the secret prayer is said, which is as follows: "Receive, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the offering we make for the sacred law of Matrimony; and be Thou the disposer of the work of which Thou art the author."

The Canon is the same as in all other Masses, till the *Pater Noster* has been said or sung. Then the priest, standing at the Epistle corner of the altar, and turning towards the bridegroom and bride, says over them the following very solemn prayer: "Favorably hear our supplications, O Lord, and graciously protect Thy institution which Thou hast ordained for the propagation of mankind; that the union made by Thy appointment may be preserved by Thy aid. Let us pray. O God, who by the power of Thy might didst make all things of nothing, and having ordered

the beginning of the universe, and made man in the image of God, didst so provide for him the inseparable aid of woman as to give to the body of woman its beginning from the flesh of man, teaching us what it pleased Thee to form from one it should never be lawful to disjoin; O God, who hast consecrated the conjugal union by so excellent a mystery, as to represent the Sacrament of Christ and the Church by the nuptial contract; O God, by whom woman is united with man, and that alliance ordained in the beginning is endowed with that blessing which alone was not taken away either by the punishment of original sin, nor by the sentence of the deluge; look down favorably upon this Thy hand-maid, who, being now to be joined in Matrimony, seeks to be defended by Thy protection. May there be upon her a yoke of charity and peace; faithful and chaste may she marry in Christ, and be an imitator of holy women. May she be pleasing to her husband, like Rachel, prudent like Rebecca, long-lived and faithful like Sara. May the author of sin have no share in any of her actions. May she remain constant to the faith and commandments; united to one may she avoid all unlawful connection. May she protect her weakness by the strength of discipline. May she be grave in bashfulness, venerable in modesty, instructed in heavenly doctrine. May she be fruitful in offspring, approved and innocent; and may she arrive at the rest of the blessed in Thy heavenly kingdom; and may they both see their children's children, even to the third and fourth generation, and arrive at their desired old age."

After this very impressive prayer, Mass is continued, and at the usual time holy Communion is given to the married couple, unless they should have received it at an earlier hour or preferred not to communicate on that day. Next the priest prays again, saying: "Behold, thus shall every man be blessed that feareth the Lord; and mayest thou see thy children's children; peace upon Israel. Let us pray. We beseech Thee, almighty God, to accompany the institution of Thy providence with Thy gracious favor; that Thou mayest preserve in lasting peace those whom Thou joinest in lawful union. Through Christ our Lord. Amen."

Before giving the usual blessing at the end of the Mass, the priest once more turns to the newly married couple and prays: "May the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob be with you, and may He fulfil His blessings in you; that you may see your children's children to the third and fourth generation, and afterwards life everlasting, by the assistance of our Lord Jesus Christ."

He may then address, if he thinks proper, some further instruction or exhortation to the recipients of the Sacrament. Lastly, he sprinkles them with holy water, and then concludes the Mass as usual.

CONCLUSION

My dear brethren, a marriage thus blessed and entered into in the proper dispositions of mind and heart cannot fail to have upon it the richest benediction of Him who is the giver of all good things. If the faithful duly appreciate these advantages, all will be most anxious to have their nuptials followed by the Mass appointed for the bridegroom and the bride.

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TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE

TEXT

See, brethren, how you walk circumspectly: not as unwise, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be not unwise; but understanding what is the will of God.—Eph. v. 15, 16.

Analysis

Introduction. St. Paul in the Epistle just read was warning the Christians of Ephesus to be on their guard against the evils of paganism that surrounded them. His words are not less useful to us; for on all sides, from within and from without, we are beset by dangers and pitfalls which imperil our salvation and which will surely work our spiritual ruin, if we be not prudent and cautious. It is necessary, therefore, that we be circumspect, that we be prudent, understanding in all things what is the will of God in our regard, because the days are evil and the time is short. Let us, then, reflect briefly on the virtue of prudence.

I. **The nature and excellence of prudence.** 1. Prudence is a virtue which enables a person to know what he should do or omit in each particular instance in order to fulfil the divine will. 2. Three things pertain especially to prudence: (a) consideration of past experiences; (b) understanding of present conditions and circumstances; (c) foresight into the future. Moreover, the prudent man willingly seeks and listens to advice, is diligent and discerning in searching for the means best fitted to carry out his purpose, is circumspect and cautious regarding the opposition he may encounter. 3. The excellence of prudence is seen in the fact that Holy Scripture

calls it the science of the saints (Prov. ix. 10), and in the fact that it is the guide and regulator of all the virtues, as St. Bernard says. Every moral virtue is found between two extremes, and it is the part of prudence to indicate this golden mean, *e.g.*, liberality stands midway between avarice and wastefulness. 4. The vices opposed to prudence *by excess* are: (a) worldly prudence, which seeks only earthly ends and aims (Rom. viii. 6-8); (b) cunning or guile, which uses means that are calculated to deceive others (2 Cor. iv. 2); (c) over-solicitude about temporal things (Matt. vi. 25, 26). 5. The vices opposed to prudence *by defect* are: rashness, which consists in acting without taking counsel; (b) inconsiderateness, which means making a decision without regard to all the possible circumstances; (c) feebleness or inconstancy of purpose.

II. **Means of advancing in prudence.** 1. Although supernatural prudence is a virtue infused into our souls by God, its use depends on our free will. Natural prudence is acquired chiefly by experience and by heeding the example and counsels of the wise. 2. In order to make progress in the virtue of prudence, (a) we should pray to God for it, according to the teachings of Scripture (Ps. xxiv. 4; Prov. viii. 14-16; Wis. ix); (b) we should mortify the passions *e.g.*, anger, lust, etc., which blind the intellect; (c) before acting we should consider the motives, results and circumstances of what we are about to do or say; (d) we should examine our conscience daily and reflect on practical means of avoiding in future the mistakes of the past; (e) in difficult matters we should have recourse to the direction and counsel of the wise and prudent (Tob. iv. 19; Ecclus. vi. 35, 36; xxxii. 24).

Exhortation. 1. Since life is short and so full of perils for our spiritual interests, we should endeavor to cultivate the virtue of prudence, especially by watching over our words, actions, companions. 2. Let us be simple as doves and wise as serpents, as our Lord said (Matt. x. 16). 3. If we were as wise and prudent for spiritual ends and aims, as worldlings are for temporal things and purposes, how great would be our eternal reward!

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Preface

(See Third Sunday after Epiphany).

Part IV (See Seventh Sunday after Pentecost).

Sermons

Prudence

BY THE REV. J. A. MC HUGH, O.P.

I. NATURE OF PRUDENCE

Chief among the mortal virtues is Prudence. For it is this virtue which leads the way for the other virtues, and thus helps us to practice them.

The prudent man not only means well, but he acts well; he not only intends what is right, but he chooses and makes use of the right course of action. The other virtues incline one to what is good; but it is Prudence which by showing the means suited to the end and by directing their use, enables one to act according to his right inclinations. Thus if you desire to give each one his due, we say that you wish to be just. But if in practice you are unjust to your neighbor, we shall find either that you do not know what ways and means should be employed or that knowing them, you do not make use of them. In either case you lack Prudence.

To put the matter another way, it is Prudence that enables us to make correct decisions in questions of moral conduct. A person may be firmly resolved to be just and strong and temperate, and yet fail to exercise these qualities because his judgment is at fault. If the conditions and circumstances in which a virtuous act can be performed were always exactly the same it would not be so difficult to live according to one's ideals, at least as far as there is question of suiting the act to the resolve. But here precisely is the difficulty. The moral virtue we aim to practice lies in the mean between opposite extremes of excess and defect, and that mean is not the same

in every case but varies according to circumstances. Thus anger at times springs from the sinful desire for revenge; at other times from zeal for God's honor. By refraining from anger in the former case one would keep to the golden mean and exercise an act of meekness; whereas in the latter case, he would fall short of that mean and be guilty of cowardice. Again to risk one's life in the effort to save a drowning person could be either bravery or foolhardiness according to the circumstances.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF PRUDENCE

The virtue of Prudence is consequently very necessary, for without it the other virtues run to extremes and cease to be virtues. Fortitude changes into boldness, presumption and stubbornness; Temperance becomes Pharisaism or Manicheism (Wisdom viii. 8).

While it is true that all who are in God's grace possess as a gift from on high supernatural Prudence and that they are thus enabled to practice virtue as far as concerns what is strictly necessary for salvation; yet this virtue, like others, is strengthened by practice until it has been perfected (Hebr. v. 14). Furthermore it should be remembered that the evils consequent upon the neglect of this virtue are not few nor slight, and that the measure of Prudence required in many emergencies or conditions of life is considerable.

To realize how serious are the evil consequences of imprudence, we need but remember that it not only frustrates good intentions, but often produces the evil results one is most desirous to avoid. Thus a zeal that is not according to knowledge is often more powerful for evil than the downright scandal of a sinful life. While the latter displays wickedness in its natural repulsiveness, the former makes even virtue seem unattractive. A well meaning but misguided person can so disgust others with his conduct that instead of drawing them to piety as he desires he only drives them farther away from it.

As to the affairs and duties in which special Prudence is requisite they are present in the life of every one. The choice

of an occupation, the decision about one's state of life, the selection of a marriage companion—these and many similar matters are important not only from the natural, but even more so from the religious point of view, and demand the exercise of no common degree of Prudence. And if this virtue is so needful in the individual's government of himself, much more is it required in those who are responsible not only for themselves but for others as well, such as public officials, heads of families and all those to whom other people look for counsel and direction.

Such being the general importance of Prudence, it is proper that all give attention to the principles by which we should guide our judgments and the rules that we should follow in word and conduct. For these rules and maxims have been given us by God Himself that they may be a lamp to our feet and a light to our paths (Ps. cxviii. 105). It is by observing them that we shall exercise the virtue of Prudence and shall recognize "what is the good, and the acceptable, and the perfect will of God" (Rom. xii. 2).

III. THE PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN PRUDENCE

From the very definition of Prudence we may easily infer what are the general maxims according to which the Christian should form his practical judgments and appreciation of things. It belongs to Prudence to decide in what way and by what means, man may in his conduct attain the golden mean of reason. This virtue demands, therefore, that all the ends which one proposes for his life should be God and goodness.

There is, indeed, a natural prudence, which is concerned with purely human aims, such as success in business, science or art. Likewise there is a false or spurious prudence, whose purposes are evil. This is that worldly wisdom or skill in wrong doing which makes one resourceful and energetic in carrying out evil designs. The foresight and quickness of the dishonest steward (Luke xvi. 1-8) is an example of this pretended prudence. How opposite and contrary it is to genuine Prudence St. Paul points out when he says: "They that are

according to the flesh mind the things that are of the flesh: but they that are according to the spirit mind the things that are of the spirit. For the wisdom of the flesh is death; but the wisdom of the spirit is life and peace. Because the wisdom of the flesh is an enemy to God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither can it be. And they who are in the flesh cannot please God" (Rom. viii. 5-8).

Natural prudence, or care exercised in the temporal concerns of life is, as far as it goes, good and praiseworthy. The foresight of Joseph, who, by storing provisions during the time of plenty, saved many people from starvation in years of famine, is highly commended in Holy Scripture (Acts vii. 10). Our Lord appointed a treasurer to look after the temporal needs of Himself and His followers, and He holds up as a lesson the conduct of the builder who calculates the costs and the means of meeting them before he begins his work (Luke xiv. 28 ff.).

It is only when this natural prudence becomes excessive that it degenerates into a vice. This happens whenever a person becomes so preoccupied in things of this world that he makes them his chief concern and prefers them to his spiritual good, or gives so much attention to them that higher duties are neglected, or fears that by keeping God's law he will come to want. Against such over-balanced solicitude our Lord warns us when he says: "Seek ye, therefore first the Kingdom of God and His justice, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. vi. 33). The mad scramble after the goods of this world, which is so characteristic of the present age, shows how much need there is to-day of taking to heart the maxims of the Gospel. Many persons are so enamored with the glitter of wealth that all they do, even their good works, seem to have no other end than the accumulation and increase of money, property and resources. Others give so much attention to temporal affairs that they lose all relish for anything better, so that gradually religion becomes distasteful to them or occupies only a secondary place in their affections (Matt. xiii. 22). Still others have so little confidence in God's Providence that they excuse themselves for the neglect of spiritual duties on

the plea that they have no time to attend to the welfare of their soul, that every moment must be given to temporal affairs lest they be brought to a state of destitution (Matt. vi. 31).

Now what are the principles by which the Christian should guide himself in order that he may rise above and escape that prudence which is inspired not of heaven, but of earth or of hell? We shall mention only three of these truths: but if a person keeps them always before his mind and follows them he will not stray from the right path and will reach his eternal destiny. Wisdom "lead the just man by right ways and showed him the Kingdom of God" (Wisd. x. 10).

1. *The Eternal to be Preferred to the Temporal*

In the first place, then, if you wish to be truly prudent, *always aim at eternity.* Blessed Thomas More was imprisoned in the Tower of London because he refused to act contrary to his conscience by recognizing the pretended spiritual supremacy of King Henry VIII. One day he was visited by his wife, who implored him to yield to the wishes of the King and thus regain his liberty and honors. "How long do you think I should enjoy them?" asked More. "For twenty years and perhaps longer," his wife replied. "Woman," answered the martyr, "I will not barter eternity for twenty years." This holy man judged prudently. Here on earth we have not our true country; we are but exiles and pilgrims. However beautiful and attractive may be the place of our sojourn, it is wrong to set our hearts upon this life; for attachment to the things of time makes us forget or undervalue those of eternity. The prudent Christian, therefore, will always esteem the things of this world with reference to eternity. The life to come will never end, whereas here below all things are passing and speed quickly away.

2. *The Soul's Welfare More Important than other Goods*

Another maxim of Prudence is: *Seek above all else the salvation of your soul.* "What will it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul" (Matt. xvi. 25)? These are the words of Christ. The part of true Christian Prudence is

to lose everything rather than suffer loss to our soul. The only possession we can take with us from this world are the supernatural works and merits we have accumulated while living in the body. Nothing else, however good, laudable or even virtuous it may seem, will avail aught in the final reckoning. We should not be content, then, with laboring for our bodily well being, the improvement of our minds, the development of our power of will, the cultivation of natural virtues, even the good of our neighbor. All these things must be done for love of God and must be referred to Him as to their end. Before our Lord came to them, the disciples labored all the night and took nothing; but when they had let down their net at His bidding, their success was immediate and wonderful. If we are prudent for our higher interests, we shall work always with Jesus and for Jesus, that our daily tasks and occupations may redound to the benefit of our souls.

3. *Danger of Sin to be Guarded Against*

Finally every Christian should adopt as his motto: *Beware of the occasions of sin.* We are careful to safeguard ourselves against bodily harm. We place signals at dangerous places to warn the public against perils of death or injury. We even try to educate the careless to prefer their safety to a craze for speed. Now if it is right that we take such precautions when there is danger to life and limb, is it not also proper that we take measures to defend ourselves against the dangers that menace our souls? The Holy Ghost declares that he who loves the danger will perish in it (Ecclus. iii. 27). The companions, places, books, pictures, conversations that bring spiritual death upon the soul are dangers far more terrible than the deadly electric rail or the onrushing locomotive. The person who took foolish risks in the presence of these or other bodily dangers would be held as blameworthy if he met with serious or fatal accident. Much more is he to be censured who exposes his soul to the danger of spiritual ruin. One may trifle with death and escape unhurt; but no one can needlessly place himself in the way of temptation or sinful occasions without inflicting a wound upon his soul, even though he does not succumb to the assault that comes from without.

Prudence dictates, therefore, that the Christian either avoid altogether the occasions of sin, or if this be not possible, exercise such vigilance in their presence as to reduce the danger to a minimum. At dangerous railway crossings we often see the notice: "Stop, look, listen," and we frequently hear the ringing of signal bells several minutes before a train approaches. May we not learn from this to exercise a constant watchfulness over our spiritual safety? When anger or other passions are aroused and threaten to whirl you by their mad rush into sin, then *stop*, reflect, oppose to their impetuosity the principles of conscience and of reason. When spiritual dangers must be encountered, then *look*, think beforehand of the means to be employed to escape them, the custody of the eyes and other senses, the mortification of the passions, the fervent prayers. When finally the danger approaches, then *listen*, give ear to the resolutions formed before, to the voice of God and of conscience.

IV. AIDS TO THE PRACTICE OF PRUDENCE

Having spoken of the principles of Christian Prudence, which serve as to many well-known beacons to give us our direction and point the way, we shall now consider some of the helps that enable us to walk in the straight path. There are three acts especially that assist here, viz., deliberation before decision, decision before action, and promptness after decision.

1. *Deliberation.*

A person who makes up his mind in doubtful matters without previous reflection is guilty of precipitancy or rashness. Examples of this are seen especially in the readiness with which people gossip together, speaking thoughtlessly all that comes into their minds. St. James bids us to be slow to speak (i. 19), and we read that where there is much talk it will be difficult to escape sin. Ill-considered and impulsive words are the source of great mischief. If we wish to learn how we stand in regard to Prudence, we should first examine our consciences as to speech.

Even more harmful is it to *act* without thought. The pas-

sions—love, hatred, desire, fear, joy, sadness, etc.—are often very violent and tend to all kinds of excesses. Furthermore our prejudices are very powerful influences for evil, since they distort our judgment and hurry us on to actions the most absurd or wicked. How many mistakes, sorrows and crimes have had their origin in deeds called forth by passionate impulse or ill-formed judgments? It behooves everyone, then, to cultivate, as a corrective to these evil inclinations, the practice of acting with coolness and deliberation.

To the end that we may act with deliberation, especially in more important matters, spiritual writers recommend the following practices: first, to consider any present problem in the light of the past experience either of ourselves or others; secondly, to view the matter before us in all its bearings; thirdly, to foresee, as far as human limitations permit, the consequences of an act contemplated; fourthly, to seek the advice of those who are qualified by knowledge and piety to guide us aright; finally, to have recourse in prayer to the Father of Lights that He may visit our minds and direct our way (Ecclus. xxxvii. 19).

Especially for the young is advice needful. In energy, enthusiasm and unselfishness they may excel their elders; but they lack the experience, if not the wisdom, of the latter. Parents should be the confidants and advisers of their children, lest these be led astray by others, ill-fitted to act as guides. The young, on their part, should realize that it is a great blessing to them that they can profit by the experience and knowledge of the older people who have charge of their training. How differently things would have turned out for young King Roboam had he followed the advice given him by his father's councillors rather than that which came from his own immature companions? And how many young people have to reproach themselves all their lives because they disregarded the warnings of their elders to listen to the advice of others just as blind as themselves? To please self they cut short their schooling and the advantage of Catholic training, or they associated with evil companions, or they contracted an undesirable marriage. It is true that children are not bound to follow the

wishes of their parents in regard to their state of life; but in this as in other important affairs, they should seek the parental advice and give it respectful consideration. "My son, hear the instructions of thy father, and forsake not the law of thy mother" (Prov. i. 8, 9).

But it is not only the young who stand in need of instruction and guidance. In many intricate affairs experience does not suffice to settle doubts, but expert knowledge is required. No matter how long a person has lived, he does not think, unless he be unusually presumptious, that his years have qualified him to act as a medical or legal adviser in difficult cases. If he is wise, he sends for those who are specialists and have made a success in such matters. Now neither medicine nor law have to encounter greater difficulties than those which are presented as regards right conduct. The proper course, therefore, when doubts of conscience arise, is to go to those who are qualified by learning to give the right advice and direction. This is all the more necessary as there are many false prophets and anti-Christs gone forth who pour their baneful and immoral teachings into the ears of the world. From press and platform and even from pulpits immoral doctrines opposed to man's duties to the family, the State, his fellowman, his God, are openly taught and advocated. Though these errors come only from non-Catholic sources, their influence cannot fail to reach you who must live in the midst of the world. But you must guard yourselves against such malign teachings by seeking your instruction in religion and moral questions from the Church, which alone is the pillar and ground of truth. Be present at sermons and listen diligently to the doctrines of the Church, support and read the Catholic press and literature. Turn a deaf ear to the wicked advice that is circulated about, no matter from how high an authority it may come, and present your doubts and difficulties of conscience to your Confessor. The priest is qualified by long years of study of theology both before and after his ordination to understand and solve correctly the questions of conscience that arise. "The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge, and they shall seek the law at his mouth" (Malach. ii. 7).

2. *Judgment*

The second act of Prudence is to judge aright. After having deliberated on various courses of action, the prudent man chooses the one that is best fitted to his purpose. He arrives at his decision by weighing and comparing the means that offer themselves, by appraising their respective values in the light of the conditions and circumstances in which he must act. This act of judgment does not differ in reality from a well informed and righteous conscience, for it is a practical decision by which we choose that which here and now is good and virtuous. All are not equally gifted with the common-sense, practical judgment and ability to reason on which this second act of Prudence depends. Those, consequently, who are unable to decide what, or when or how they should act in spiritual matters, should abide by the prudent direction of their spiritual advisors. Especially is this necessary in the case of scrupulous or lax persons. Their judgment is so perverted by their foolish fears or loose principles that it is not a reliable guide and their safety lies in obedience to their Confessor.

A danger to be avoided in forming a prudent judgment is that we may adopt means that are not real but only pretended. Our Lord commanded His Apostles to be prudent as serpents and simple as doves (Matt. x. 30). They needed Prudence to escape the perils that would beset them in a corrupt world; but they also needed simplicity that they might give no cause for suspicion or distrust. Loyal as they were to the cause of Christ, they might be tempted to resort to deceit or trickery in order the better to cope with a cunning and dishonest world. But our Lord warned them against the use of such means. The truth of God and the goodness of virtue do not need human guile or fraud for their protection. On the contrary Scripture assures us that the Lord detests insincerity and double dealing (Proverbs vi. 19; xii. 12). Furthermore men are quick to notice a want of candor, and while some may admire the kind of shrewdness we are speaking of, in the depths of their hearts they cannot respect it. On the contrary, sincerity is honored by all and reflects nothing but credit on the

efforts of those who practice it. Worldly people of course deride simplicity. They think that Prudence requires one to deceive others as to his thoughts by equivocal words or deeds. But such astuteness, far from being wisdom, is only foolishness. The Apostles, following the injunction of Christ, used both Prudence and simplicity and so overcame the violence and cunning of the world. Truth is great and will prevail over error without the assistance of craftiness. Let us not fall, therefore, into the mistake of identifying or even associating Prudence with dishonesty. The resemblance between them is only superficial. The dishonest man makes use of wrongful means to gain an immediate purpose; but he who is truly prudent, realizing that deceit turns him aside from his supreme goal, employs only such means as are accommodated to the attainment of his end.

3. *Decision*

We come now to the third act of Prudence, which is to command. It would be of little use to deliberate carefully and choose wisely if we hesitated to follow out our decisions. To delay action until we have given sufficient time and thought to our projects is prudent; but to postpone unduly our well considered plans is imprudent. Indeed inconstancy and indecision of this kind are especially contrary to Prudence; for of all the acts of this virtue, promptness in carrying out our judgments is the most important. As was just said, investigation, advice, reflection, judgment, determination, are only so many preparations for the act by which we pursue a certain virtuous course. If we stopped with them, we should be like a man who laid a good foundation and then neglected to rear the superstructure. And yet this defective, partial prudence, or rather this species of imprudence, is not rare. We are guilty of it every time we put off from day to day the good resolutions we have formed. Many a noble design which would have added greatly to the glory of God, the benefit of our neighbor and our own spiritual welfare has been thus abandoned. We become like a son who promises to labor in

his father's vineyard and then changing his mind, gives the lie to the fair expectancy he has raised. Procrastination even leads to the loss of many a soul. Those who delay from month to month, from year to year, the abandonment of that sinful occasion or practice, the performance of that restitution or duty, which their peace with God makes necessary, are perhaps the most imprudent people in the world. Well they know that death may come upon them unawares, like the lion that springs from concealment on the traveler when there is none to help. Yet they go on with greater recklessness than the gambler who risks his fortune on the toss of a coin, exposing themselves daily and hourly to ruin unspeakable and irreparable.

What is the cause of this irresolution that defeats the most prudent thought and decision and even plunges souls into the abyss? In the first place it is due to infirmity of purpose in the face of difficulties. The passions rebel at the good resolve one has decreed. They move for delay or reconsideration. This is feebly granted, the will's determination weakened, and what was well intended loses the name of action. Or again habits long indulged refuse to be thrown aside. It is too late to prepare medicine when through long delay a disease has progressed too far; and, though it is never too late to effect reformation of life, it may on account of the tyranny of habit be next to impossible. Again, laziness may have a great deal to do with that changeableness which makes a person reverse to-morrow what he has decided on to-day. It is the sluggard "who willeth and willeth not" (Prov. xiii. 4).

Finally, do we not fail in many of our resolves because we are depending on our own efforts alone? We should not forget that as it is God who enlightens us to think what is right and moves us to desire it, so it is likewise from His powerful grace that we must expect the impulse towards fulfilling what we have determined on. Above all then it is important that we beseech God to illumine our minds with the brightness of His light and to lead us, that by His grace we may be enabled not only to see what should be done but also to perform it.

WE MUST PRIZE AND PRESERVE THE VIRTUE OF PRUDENCE

When God offered Solomon the choice of any gift that he might desire, the latter prayed for an understanding heart to discern between good and bad (3 Kings iii. 9). The request was granted and such wisdom was given to Solomon that he became famous among all the kings of the earth (3 Kings iv. 34).

God has blessed us even above Solomon, for in giving us the light of Christian faith He has made known to us truths that many kings and prophets desired to hear and did not hear. One who is greater than Solomon has been our instructor and example, Christ who is the Way. And Christ has sent His Holy Spirit to dwell within His Church and in the souls of His just, that we may live by the faith once delivered to us. And what an outpouring of grace is bestowed upon us by this Father of the poor, this Giver of gifts, this Light of hearts! Prudence, the noblest of the moral virtues, He gives us to direct our supernatural acts and to apply our faith to concrete experience. Moreover because "the thoughts of mortal men are fearful and our counsels uncertain" (Wisd. ix. 14), He completes this virtue with the gift of Counsel. The Spirit Himself becomes our advisor to supply for what is lacking in our own Prudence and to be our chief guide and director in the practical affairs of our spiritual life.

Solomon, though so highly gifted by God, turned from Him in his old age and became an idolater. What a sad falling off was that! He who in his youth had preferred wisdom before kingdoms and thrones and esteemed riches as nothing in comparison with her, in his advanced years chose as his portion foolishness and followed after strange gods. The man renowned for wisdom became in the end an example of folly. The fall of Solomon is a warning. He yielded to passion, and it is chiefly this that destroys Prudence (Summa I. II. 47. xvi). We must not neglect the grace that is in us. We must use it to subject passion and impulse to reason, natural prudence to the Prudence of faith.

Original sin has clouded and obscured our natural powers of perception, especially with reference to moral and religious

truth. But there is given us a light in the darkness. The Spirit of Truth abides in the Church of Christ to teach us and He dwells also in our souls. Be led, therefore, by the Holy Ghost. He speaks to us through the Church; He speaks to us through the good thoughts which He sends into our minds. We must implore His aid, listen for His voice, yield ourselves to His direction.

It is thus that we shall become rich in Prudence; it is thus that we shall retain the gift of God, which is more precious than all riches. Forsake not Prudence "and she shall keep thee; love her and she shall preserve thee" (Prov. iv. 6).

Spiritual Wisdom

BY THE REV. THOMAS F. BURKE, C.S.P.

WISDOM OF THE WORLD

In the parable of the unjust steward not only is there taught a lesson of deepest significance, but there is also made evident the meaning of the expression "this world" in the mind of the Saviour. The children of this world, it is evident, from the example of the unjust steward, are they who find their object of existence in this life alone and look not beyond to another. They live, they fight, they even sin only for this earth's gifts. The children of the world are children of this world alone, while the children of light are they whose vision penetrates into the beyond and see a life whose principles are of eternity.

The rebuke offered by our Lord in the lesson that He would teach is that while those who live for this life and this world and its unsatisfying treasures, bring to their task the energy and wisdom that denote earnestness of pursuit, those who acknowledge a more glorious object and a higher duty set about their labor in a spiritless manner totally unworthy of the object in view. If the Lord commends the unjust steward, the praise is not accorded the principles at the bottom of his actions, but rather is it given to the wisdom and earnestness displayed in the pursuit. Addressing us, Christ would seem

to say: "You are called to eternal life: you acknowledge that above all the interests of this world, above all success and achievement in the walks of this day, above all the strivings and triumphs, above all the sorrows and all the joys of your sojourn here, one thing is paramount, one thing stands out and above all the rest, the gaining of eternal life. And yet, with this great object acknowledged, your efforts to gain it, when compared with the efforts put forth by the children of the world for the obtaining of an earthly goal, are puny and inadequate. Learn, then, from the children of the world to imitate them, not in following their objects, not in acknowledging their principles, but in laboring for your true goal with a zeal equal to their zeal."

LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD

We have but to glance into every-day life to come face to face with almost countless instances of the unscrupulous pursuit of earthly ambitions of which that of the unjust steward is a sample. To secure for himself a position of future comfort this man was willing to use any means however unjust; but in doing so he manifests a shrewdness that in itself is commendable and in a worthier cause to be imitated. He is wise in his methods, considering the object he has in view, and wisdom is one of the requisites in a Christian striving in the pursuit of eternal life. "They that seek after the Lord take notice of all things" (Prov. xxviii. 5). They are ready to grasp everything that will add to their spiritual store and will secure a future happiness. The spiritual-minded man, indeed, fully appreciates that it is the power of God that can clothe him with glory; that it is God's gift that can make him acceptable in the sight of heaven; but he also realizes that unless he himself put forth every effort of which he is capable, unless he be truly wise in preparing for the future, he shall fail of his goal. The man who is striving for earthly comfort is alive to every opportunity. Is there a chance to gain a dollar, he seizes it with avidity. Is there an opening through which he can secure influence that will stand him in good stead later,

he enters thereat quickly. Especially is there an occasion presented the acceptance of which means ease for all the rest of his days, even at the risk of life itself, he makes use of it.

How many, in spiritual things, show forth a like wisdom? Every day, almost every moment, there are granted to man opportunities to grow spiritually, to advance the soul toward that for which it thirsts, union with God. Yet, how many of these opportunities are heeded? In the great question of eternal life itself, the common word is: "I shall put off attending to that until to-morrow. To-morrow will be time enough." In the subordinate questions of the means to the gaining of this life, the neglect is even more apparent. Even amid those who truly desire eternal life, who fully realize the obstacles that have to be overcome, the temptations that have to be fought a woful negligence of offered graces proclaims the lack of heavenly wisdom. It may be that some special grace upon which may depend the whole welfare of his existence is disregarded. It is as if a shipwrecked mariner sat upon the shore of his lonely island awaiting the passing of a vessel; and when it appeared allowed it to sail on without having made an effort to draw attention to his distress.

If we would be spiritually wise, therefore, we must be ready to accept every chance that will tell for the life of our soul. As the children of light we must be at least as wise as the children of the world. We are thus wise only when we do every meritorious work that is within our power; only when we keep in view the goal of our spiritual life and make use of the spiritual means whereby we may attain it. They that are wise in possessing such a wisdom are truly blessed, for of such the Holy Word says: "They that hold her fast shall inherit life: and whithersoever she entereth God will give a blessing" (Eccles. iv. 14).

PERSISTENCE OF WORLDLINGS

Another quality that forms an essential part of true Christian foresight is persistency. A man must be not only shrewd but also persevering. In the world not only the one who is alive

to his opportunities, but also the steady plodder succeeds. Constancy of purpose is the secret of success. Enter into any of the various spheres of action and this lesson becomes apparent. In the world of literature, for example, how many a man whose name is now honored has reached his pinnacle only after repeated failures. In the world of science and invention how many a one, baffled for years in the fight, has finally, through unswerving effort, given to men the great product of his genius. In the world of wealth especially how many a one has obtained his ambition only through repeated struggles, unscrupulously fought perhaps, but nevertheless reaching to the goal.

Is there a like persistency evident in the combat of the soul in its spiritual existence? In many instances, yes: and the result is triumph; but also, in many instances, no: and the result is defeat. Behold one soul that for many days has journeyed in the paths of evil and at length would wish to turn from the way of death. For a time there is a noble battle fought, but when the temptation again assails, when the citadel of virtue is subjected to repeated attacks, the poor soul, instead of fighting on with undaunted courage, goes down again into the depths. From the children of this world such can learn a lesson of constancy of purpose, and can know that despite repeated failures, final victory is awarded to him who rises again and again.

Or, mayhap, there is another soul that has faithfully toiled along the rough road of service constantly meeting and as constantly overcoming obstacles, until one day in the catastrophe of some mighty upheaval of passion, it is overcome. The cowardly suggestion would urge a complete yielding to sin. Very often the suggestion is obeyed and one fall follows another. The wisdom of the world however would suggest a like wisdom in the battle of the soul: "Thou hast fallen after many victories; thy fall is serious: but it is only one: recover from it and continue to fight bravely, persistently on."

Yet another that has tasted the sweetness of the spiritual fountains on the heights, that has dwelt with delight upon the vision that is not vouchsafed to many: that has come very near to the heart of God, may feel one day a bitterness and a

desolation because, it seems, God has forgotten. Then is it that the wisdom of faith and hope and love must assert itself and cry out in heeded voice: Walk on in thy way: that way is dark and rough and desolate for the time; but within you there lives the certainty that should bear you up, of the bright coming of God's sun beyond; telling you to be confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perfect in unto the day of Christ Jesus (Phil. i. 6).

PRUDENCE OF CHILDREN OF THIS WORLD

The wisdom of the world requires in the one who would win success at any of her shrines an intimate knowledge of his special craft. Should not this teach us that for spiritual growth we must seek out a never satiated intimacy with the principles of the soul and the science of God? It is, in the world, the man who studies, the man who becomes thoroughly acquainted with the laws and rules prevalent in his special field of labor, that reaches the goal. So, no matter how shrewd we may be in seizing spiritual opportunities or how persistent in keeping the final object before our eyes, we must likewise study, to the extent that we can, the laws of the soul's life. In all things ignorance is to be deplored, but in nothing more than in spiritual affairs. In society, the man without sufficient knowledge to render him a useful member of the social body is considered rather as a burden than a benefit to the world. How much more to be regretted is it for a Christian to be unacquainted or only slightly acquainted with the principles of his religion and their essential relations to his soul.

As a rule the ignorance of spiritual things is a culpable ignorance, for no one, because of circumstances or lack of means or time, is excluded from the school of prayer. One may, without any personal blame, be forced to forego education and training in those branches of knowledge that would increase his own store of secular learning and make him more useful and helpful to mankind, but none is really barred from any of the privileges of the school of training for the soul; for that school is within man's self. True, the great and fundamental

truths of religion are bestowed upon us through the authority of God's mouthpiece upon earth, His Church. True, the inspired Word of God affords us religious truth imparted to man by the voice of heaven itself, but the school in which these things are efficiently applied is within the soul of man. Ignorance is dispelled from the mind when it hearkens to the Word of God as explained by His rightly ordained ministers, or when it reads in the Holy Scriptures or in other spiritual works written as guides on the intricate way of the soul's journey, but the principal labor must be performed within and by man himself. In the school of prayer, open to all, the least educated as well as the most highly cultured, in that school where the individual sits humbly at the feet of the Master presenting his petitions and his needs, in that school which is the kingdom of God within and where in loving thought the soul seeks royal favor, there is heaven's place of training. It is the spiritual house of study. Ever, too, should we bear in mind that if the Sacraments, instituted by the Saviour, bear grace to the soul, we have likewise a means of grace in prayer, powerful to bring God unto us. They that succeed in a heavenly sense, therefore, are they that are sedulous in prayer, in other words, they who make a specialty of the science of God.

CONCLUSION

From the children of the world we can learn these lessons, to be, like them, wise and persistent and studious. And, as the object of our effords is infinitely superior to theirs, so, too, will the results be more satisfying and the victory more lasting. If, as we believe, the soul is made for God, to be with Him throughout eternity, is there any effort that we should not put forth to attain that end? If, as we believe, we are called to dwell in the courts of heaven forever, is there any labor at which we should stop to attain that destiny? If, as we believe, the final triumph of the soul, is the most glorious work given to man, is there any struggle, great or small, unworthy of our steel? We must, then, be truly children of the light,with our faces set toward the sun that shines in the eternal

courts, laboring with a zeal not only as great as that manifested by the children of the world in their reaching out for earthly triumphs, but even with a greater zeal because our object is nobler, our goal is higher, our destiny the greatest that it is given man to attain.

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TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

FORGIVE US OUR TRESPASSES AS WE FORGIVE THEM THAT TRESPASS AGAINST US

TEXT

So also shall my heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not everyone his brother from your hearts.—MATT. xviii. 35.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. Our Lord had just been instructing the Apostles regarding fraternal correction and the forgiveness of injuries, and Peter asked Him how often they were supposed to pardon offenders, whether "till seven times." Peter thought his charity was extraordinary, since his suggestion was to forgive four times oftener than was required by the Jewish masters. But the Saviour, showing that there should be no limit to our willingness to pardon, uttered the parable we have just read.

The object of this parable is to teach us the vast difference in gravity between offences committed against God and those

which we commit against one another, and the consequent necessity of our forgiving our offending brethren, if we ourselves would be forgiven by God. The debt owed the lord in the parable was equal to about $20,000,000 in our money; and, according to the law of the ancients, the lord had a right to sell the servant and all he possessed, including his wife and children, in order that at least some payment might be made. On the contrary, however, the lord forgave the insolvent servant all his debt. But how different was the conduct of that forgiven debtor toward his fellow-servant who owed him the comparatively small sum of one hundred pence, equal to about $15.00! He who had been pardoned so much was unwilling to forgive so little.

The debt contracted through sin, which each one of us owes to God, is likewise incomparably greater than any debt owed us by our fellow-creatures for offences committed against us. Unless, therefore, we forgive those that offend us, how can we hope for pardon from God for our sins against Him?

I. **"Forgive us our trespasses."** 1. By reason of our sins we are all debtors to God for a certain amount of punishment, and are under obligation of restoring to Him that of which we have deprived Him, namely, honor, obedience, etc. 2. We say *our trespasses,* because we acknowledge in this Petition that our sins are our own; we say *us,* because we desire also the pardon of our neighbor's faults. 3. We ask God to *forgive* us, however, like the servant in the parable, because we are insolvent debtors, and must appeal to God's mercy and generosity, if we are ever to be forgiven. 4. Even after we have obtained pardon for our sins through the Sacrament of Penance, we are still obliged to ask forgiveness, since we can never be absolutely certain that our dispositions were such as to clear away every stain of sin from our souls, and cancel every debt of punishment.

II. **"As we forgive them that trespass against us."** 1. By trespasses, or debts, against us we understand all the wrongs

and injuries we receive from our neighbor. 2. The forgiveness of these injuries on our part our Lord makes a condition of our being forgiven by Him. We really, therefore, ask God to grant or refuse us pardon accordingly as we grant or refuse pardon to our brethren. 3. The pardon we grant to others, however, does not give us any license to offend God, or to neglect other necessary conditions for obtaining God's pardon, such as confession, restitution, etc. But just as the refusal of pardon may be the beginning of our ruin, so the showing of mercy to others is the surest means of disposing God to show mercy to us. 4. Our forgiveness of others should exclude all deliberate hatred and desire for vengeance, and should include interior good will, together with the outward marks of good will, *i.e.*, the ordinary manifestations of friendship, unless this would lead to greater evils. 5. The offending party is under obligation to make the first advances toward reconciliation. The offended party is obliged to grant pardon, but he is not forbidden to claim satisfaction for losses he has suffered.

CONCLUSION. 1. The dispositions with which we should make this Petition of the Lord's Prayer are: (a) repentance for our sins; (b) confidence in God's mercy. 2. In order that this Petition may be salutary for us, we must be ever ready to forgive others, and should frequently approach the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

THE FIFTH PETITION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors

THE IMPORTANCE OF EXPLAINING THIS PETITION

So many are the things which display at once God's infinite power and His equally infinite wisdom and goodness, that wheresoever we turn our eyes or direct our thoughts, we meet with the most certain signs of omnipotence and benignity. And yet there is truly nothing that more eloquently proclaims

His supreme love and admirable charity towards us, than the inexplicable mystery of the Passion of Jesus Christ, whence springs that never failing fountain to wash away the defilements of sin, in which, under the guidance and bounty of God, we desire to be merged and purified, when we beg of Him to forgive us our debts.

WHAT THIS FIFTH PETITION CONTAINS

This Petition contains a sort of summary of those benefits with which the human race has been enriched through Jesus Christ. This Isaias taught when he said: "The iniquity of the house of Jacob shall be forgiven; and this is all the fruit, that the sin thereof should be taken away." [1] David also shows this, proclaiming those blessed who could partake of that salutary fruit: "Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven." [2]

The pastor, therefore, should study and explain accurately and diligently the meaning of this Petition, which, we perceive, is so important to the attainment of salvation.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THIS AND THE PRECEDING PETITIONS

In this Petition we enter on a new manner of praying. For hitherto we asked of God not only eternal and spiritual goods, but also transient and temporal advantages; whereas, we now ask to be freed from the evils of the soul and of the body, of this life and of the life to come.

DISPOSITIONS WITH WHICH THIS PETITION SHOULD BE OFFERED

Since, however, to obtain what we ask we must pray in a becoming manner, it appears expedient to explain the disposition with which this prayer should be offered to God.

I. ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF SIN

The pastor, then, will admonish the faithful, that he who comes to offer this Petition must first acknowledge, and next

[1] Is. xxvii. 9.
[2] Ps. xxx. 1.

feel sorrow and compunction for his sins. He must also be firmly convinced that to sinners, thus disposed and prepared, God is willing to grant pardon. This confidence is necessary to sinners, lest perhaps the bitter remembrance and acknowledgment of their sins should be followed by that despair of pardon, which of old seized the mind of Cain [3] and of Judas,[4] both of whom looked on God solely as an avenger and punisher, forgetting that He is also mild and merciful.

In this Petition, therefore, we ought to be so disposed, that, acknowledging our sins in the bitterness of our souls, we may fly to God as to a Father, not as to a Judge, imploring Him to deal with us not according to His justice, but according to His mercy.

We shall be easily induced to acknowledge our sins if we listen to God Himself admonishing us through the Sacred Scriptures in this regard. Thus we read in David: "They are all gone aside; they are become unprofitable together; there is none that doeth good, no not one." [5] Solomon speaks to the same purpose: "There is no just man upon earth, that doth good, and sinneth not." [6] To this subject apply also these words: "Who can say: my heart is clean, I am pure from sin?" [7] The very same has been written by St. John to deter men from arrogance: "If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." [8] Jeremias also says: "Thou hast said: I am without sin, and am innocent; and therefore, let thy anger be turned away from me. Behold, I will contend with thee in judgment, because thou hast said: I have not sinned." [9]

Christ the Lord, who spoke by the mouth of all these, confirms their teaching by this Petition in which He commands us to confess our sins. That such is the sense of the Petition we learn from the Council of Milevi, which forbids us to interpret it otherwise. "It hath pleased the Council, that who-

[3] Gen. iv. 13.
[4] Matt. xxvii. 4, 5.
[5] Ps. xiii. 3; lii. 4.
[6] Eccles. vii. 21.
[7] Prov. xx. 9.
[8] 1 John i. 8.
[9] Jer. ii. 35.

soever will have it that these words of the Lord's prayer, *forgive us our debts,* are said by holy men in humility, not in truth, let him be anathema."[10] For who can endure a person praying, and lying not to men, but to the Lord Himself, saying with the lips that he desires to be forgiven, but with the heart, that he has no debts to be forgiven?[11]

2. REPENTANCE

In making this necessary acknowledgment of our sins, it is not enough to call them to mind lightly; for it is necessary that the recollection of them be bitter, that it touch the heart, pierce the soul, and imprint sorrow. Wherefore, the pastor should treat this point diligently, that his pious hearers may not only recollect their sins, and iniquities, but recollect them with pain and sorrow; so that with true interior contrition they may betake themselves to God their Father, humbly imploring Him to pluck from the soul the piercing stings of sin.

THE BASENESS OF SIN

The pastor, however, should not be content with placing before the eyes of the faithful the turpitude of sin. He should also depict the unworthiness and baseness of men, who, though nothing but rottenness and corruption, dare to outrage in a manner beyond all belief the incomprehensible majesty and ineffable excellence of God, particularly after having been created, redeemed, and enriched by Him with countless and invaluable benefits.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF SIN

And for what? Only for this, that separating ourselves from God our Father, who is the supreme good, and lured by the most base rewards of sin, we may devote ourselves to the devil, to become his most wretched slaves. Language is inadequate to depict the cruel tyranny which the devil exercises over those who, having shaken off the sweet yoke of

[10] Can. 7, 8, 9.
[11] C. of Trent, sess. 6. de just., c. xi; Aug. in Ench., c. 17.

God, and broken the most lovely bond of charity by which our spirit is bound to God our Father, have gone over to their relentless enemy, who is therefore called in Scripture, "the prince and ruler of the world," [12] "the prince of darkness," [13] and "king over all the children of pride." [14] Truly to those who are oppressed by the tyranny of the devil apply these words of Isaias: "O Lord our God, other lords besides thee have had dominion over us." [15]

If these broken covenants of love do not move us, let at least the calamities into which we fall by sin move us. The sanctity of the soul is violated, which we know to have been wedded to Christ. That temple of the Lord is profaned, against the contaminators of which the Apostle utters this denunciation: "If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy." [16]

Innumerable are the evils brought upon man by sin, that almost infinite pest of which David says: "There is no health in my flesh, because of thy wrath; there is no peace for my bones, because of my sins." [17] In these words he marks the violence of the plague, confessing that it left no part of him uninfected by pestiferous sin; for the poison had penetrated into his bones, that is, it infected his understanding and will, which are the two most intimate faculties of the soul. This widespread pestilence the Sacred Scriptures point out, when they designate sinners as *the lame, the deaf, the dumb, the blind, the paralysed.*

But, besides the anguish which he felt on account of the enormity of his sins, David was afflicted yet more by the knowledge that he had provoked the wrath of God against him. For the wicked are at war with God, who is offended beyond belief at their crimes; hence the Apostle says: "Wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that worketh evil." [18] Although the sinful act is transient,

[12] John xii. 31; xiv. 30.
[13] Eph. vi. 12.
[14] Job xli. 25.
[15] Is. xxvi. 13.
[16] 1 Cor. iii. 17.
[17] Ps. xxxvii. 4.
[18] Rom. ii. 8, 9.

yet the sin by its guilt and stain remains; and the imminent wrath of God pursues it, as the shadow does the body.

When, therefore, David was pierced by these tormenting thoughts, he was moved to seek the pardon of his sins. That the faithful, imitating the prophet, may learn to grieve, that is, to become truly penitent, and cherish the hope of pardon, the pastor should call to their attention the example of David's penitential sorrow, and the lessons of instruction drawn from his fiftieth Psalm.

How great is the utility of this sort of instruction, which teaches us to grieve for our sins, God Himself declares by the mouth of Jeremias, who, when exhorting the Israelites to repentance, admonished them to awake to a sense of the evils that follow upon sin. "Know thou," he says, "and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for thee, to have left the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not with thee, saith the Lord, the God of hosts."[19] They who lack this necessary sense of acknowledgment and grief, are said by the prophets Isaias, Ezechiel, and Zachary to have "a hard heart,"[20] "a stony heart,"[21] "a heart of adamant;"[22] for, like stone, they are softened by no sorrow, having no sense of life, that is, of the salutary recognition of their sinfulness.

3. CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S MERCY

But lest the faithful, terrified by the grievousness of their sins, despair of being able to obtain pardon, the pastor ought to encourage them to hope by the following considerations.

As is declared in an Article of the Creed, Christ the Lord has given power to the Church to remit sins.

Furthermore, in this Petition, our Lord has taught how great is the goodness and bounty of God towards mankind; for if God were not ready and prepared to pardon penitents their sins, never would He have prescribed this formula of prayer: "Forgive us our trespasses." Wherefore we ought to

[19] Jer. ii. 19.
[20] Is. xlvi. 12.
[21] Ezech. xxxvi. 26.
[22] Zach. vii. 12.

be firmly convinced, that since He commands us in this Petition, to implore His mercy, He will not fail to bestow it on us. For this Petition assuredly implies that God is so disposed towards us, as willingly to pardon those who are truly penitent.

God it is against whom, having cast off obedience, we sin; the order of whose wisdom we disturb, as far as in us lies; whom we offend; whom we outrage by words and deeds. But it is also God, our most beneficent Father, who, having it in His power to pardon all transgressions, has not only declared His willingness to do so, but has also obliged men to ask Him for pardon, and has taught in what words they are to do so. To no one, therefore, can it be a matter of doubt, that under His guidance it is in our power to be reconciled to God. And as this declaration of the divine willingness to pardon increases faith, nurtures hope, inflames charity, it will be worth while to amplify this subject, by citing some Scriptural authorities and some examples of penitents to whom God granted pardon of the most grievous crimes. Since, however, in the introduction to the Lord's Prayer and in that portion of the Creed which teaches the forgiveness of sins, we were as diffuse on the subject as circumstances allowed, the pastor will borrow from those places whatever may seem pertinent for instruction on this point, for the rest drawing on the fountains of the Sacred Scriptures.

WHAT WE ASK IN THIS PETITION

The pastor should also follow the same plan which we thought should be used in the other Petitions. Let him explain, then, what the word *debts* here signifies, lest perhaps the faithful, deceived by its ambiguity, pray for something different from what should be prayed for.

MEANING OF THE WORD "DEBTS"

First, then, we are to know, that we by no means ask for exemption from the debt we owe to God on so many accounts, the payment of which is essential to salvation, namely, that of

loving Him with our whole heart, our whole soul, and our whole mind; neither do we ask to be in future exempt from the duties of obedience, worship, veneration, or any other similar obligation, comprised also under the word *debts*.

What we do ask is that He may deliver us from our sins. This is the interpretation of St. Luke,[23] who, instead of *debts*, makes use of the word *sins*, because by their commission we become guilty before God and incur a debt of punishment, which we must pay either by satisfaction or by suffering. It was of this debt that Christ our Lord spoke by the mouth of His prophet: "Then did I pay that which I took not away."[24] From these words we may understand that we are not only debtors, but also unequal to the payment of our debt, the sinner being of himself utterly incapable of making satisfaction.

Wherefore we must fly to the mercy of God; and as justice, of which God is most tenacious, is an equal and corresponding attribute to mercy, we must make use of prayer, and the intercession of the Passion of our Lord Jesus Christ, without which no one ever obtained the pardon of his sins, and from which, as from its source, have flown all the efficacy and virtue of satisfaction. For of such value is that price paid by Christ our Lord on the cross, and communicated to us through the Sacraments, received either actually or in purpose and desire, that it obtains and accomplishes for us the pardon of our sins, which is the object of our prayer in this Petition.

Here we ask pardon not only for our venial offences, for which pardon may most easily be obtained, but also for grievous and mortal sins. With regard to grave sins, however, this Petition cannot procure forgiveness unless it derive that efficacy from the Sacrament of Penance, received, as we have already said, either actually or at least in desire.

MEANING OF THE WORD "OUR"

The words *our debts* are used here in a sense entirely different from that in which we said *our bread*. That bread is ours, be-

[23] Luke xi. 4.
[24] Ps. lxviii. 5.

cause it is given us by the munificence of God; whereas sins are ours, because with us rests their guilt. They are our voluntary acts, otherwise they would not have the character of sin.

Admitting, therefore, and confessing the guilt of our sins, we implore the clemency of God, which is necessary for their expiation. In this we make use of no palliation whatever, nor do we transfer the blame to others, as did our first parents Adam and Eve.[25] We judge ourselves, employing, if we are wise, the prayer of the prophet: "Incline not my heart to evil words, to make excuses in sins." [26]

MEANING OF THE WORDS "FORGIVE US"

Nor do we say, *forgive me,* but *forgive us;* because the fraternal relationship and charity which subsist between all men, demand of each of us that, being solicitous for the salvation of all our neighbors, we pray also for them while offering prayers for ourselves.

This manner of praying, taught by Christ the Lord, and subsequently received and always retained by the Church of God, the Apostles most strictly observed themselves and taught others to observe.

Of this ardent zeal and earnestness in praying for the salvation of our neighbors, we have the splendid example of Moses in the Old, and of St. Paul in the New Testament. The former besought God thus: "Either forgive them this trespass; or, if thou dost not, strike me out of the book that thou hast written"; [27] while the latter prayed after this manner: "I wished myself to be an anathema from Christ for my brethren." [28]

MEANING OF THE WORDS "AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS"

The word *as* may be understood in two senses. It may be taken as having the force of a comparison meaning that we beg of God to pardon us our sins, just as we pardon the wrongs and contumelies which we receive from those by whom we have been

[25] Gen. iii. 12, 13.
[26] Ps. cxl. 4.
[27] Ex. xxxii. 32.
[28] Rom. ix. 3.

injured. It may also be understood as denoting a condition, and in this sense Christ the Lord interprets that formula. "If," He says, "you forgive men their offences, your heavenly Father will also forgive you your offences; but if you will not forgive men, neither will your Father forgive you your sins." [29]

Either sense, however, equally contains the necessity of forgiveness, intimating as it does that, if we desire that God should grant us the pardon of our offences, we ourselves must pardon those from whom we have received injury; for so rigorously does God exact from us forgetfulness of injuries, and mutual affection and love, that He rejects and despises the gifts and sacrifices of those who are not reconciled to one another.

NECESSITY OF FORGIVENESS

Even the law of nature requires that we conduct ourselves towards others as we would have them conduct themselves towards us; hence he would be most impudent who would ask of God the pardon of his own offences while he continued to cherish enmity against his neighbor.

Those, therefore, on whom injuries have been inflicted, should be ready and willing to pardon, urged to it as they are by this form of prayer, and by the command of God in St. Luke: "If thy brother sin against thee, reprove him; and if he repent, forgive him; and if he sin against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent, forgive him." [30] In the Gospel of St. Matthew we read: "Love your enemies;" [31] and the Apostle, and before him Solomon wrote: "If thy enemy be hungry, give him to eat; if he thirst, give him to drink;" [32] and finally we read in St. Mark: "When you shall stand to pray, forgive if you have anything against any man; that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your sins." [33]

[29] Matt. vi. 14, 15.
[30] Luke xvii. 3, 4.
[31] Matt. v. 44.
[32] Rom. xii. 20; Prov. xxv. 21.
[33] Mark xi. 25.

REASONS FOR FORGIVENESS

But since on account of the corruption of nature there is nothing to which man brings himself more reluctantly than to the pardon of injuries, let pastors exert all the powers and resources of their minds to change and bend the dispositions of the faithful to this mildness and mercy so necessary to a Christian. Let them dwell on those passages of Scripture in which we hear God commanding to pardon enemies.

Let them also insist on this certain truth, that one of the surest signs that men are children of God is their willingness to forgive injuries and sincerely love their enemies; for in loving our enemies there shines forth in us some likeness to God our Father, who, by the death of His Son, ransomed from everlasting perdition, and reconciled to Himself, the human race, who before were His most inveterate enemies.

Let the close of this exhortation and injunction be the command of Christ, which, without utter disgrace and ruin, we cannot refuse to obey: "Pray for them that persecute and calumniate you; that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven." [34]

ADVICE TO THOSE WHO FIND IT HARD TO FORGIVE

But in this matter no ordinary prudence is required on the part of the pastor, lest, knowing the difficulty and necessity of this precept, any one despair of salvation. There are those who, aware that they ought to bury injuries in voluntary oblivion and ought to love those that injure them, desire to do so, and do so as far as they are able, but feel that they cannot efface from the mind all recollection of injuries. For there lurk in the mind some remains of private grudge, in consequence of which such persons are disturbed by misgivings of conscience, fearing that they have not in simplicity and frankness laid aside their enmities and consequently do not obey the command of God.

Here, therefore, the pastor will explain the contrary desires of the flesh and of the spirit; that the former is prone to re-

[34] Matt. v. 44.

venge, the latter ready to pardon; that hence a continual struggle and conflict goes on between them. Wherefore he should point out that although the appetites of corrupt nature are ever opposing and rebelling against reason, we are not on this account to be uneasy regarding salvation, provided the spirit persevere in the duty and disposition of forgiving injuries and of loving our neighbor.

There may be some who, because they have not yet been able to bring themselves to forget injuries and to love their enemies, are consequently deferred by the condition contained in this Petition from making use of the Lord's Prayer. To remove from their minds this pernicious error, the pastor should adduce the two following considerations.

In the first place, whoever belongs to the number of the faithful, offers this prayer in the name of the entire Church, in which there must necessarily be some pious persons who have forgiven their debtors the debts here mentioned.

Secondly, when we ask this favor from God, we also ask for whatever co-operation with the Petition is necessary on our part in order to obtain the object of our prayer. Thus we ask the pardon of our sins and the gift of true repentance; we beg that we may be able to abhor our sins, and confess them truly and piously to the priest. Since, then, it is necessary for us to forgive those who inflicted on us any loss or injury, when we ask pardon of God, we beg of Him at the same time to grant us grace to be reconciled to those against whom we harbor hatred.

Those, therefore, who are troubled by that groundless and perverse fear, that by this prayer they provoke still more the wrath of God, should be undeceived and should be exhorted to make frequent use of a prayer in which they beseech God our Father to grant them the disposition to forgive those who have injured them and to love their enemies.

How to make this Petition fruitful.—I. Penitential Dispositions

But that this Petition may be really fruitful we should first seriously reflect that we are suppliants before God, soliciting from

Him pardon, which is not granted but to the penitent; and that we should, therefore, be animated by that charity and piety which are fitting in penitents whom it eminently becomes to keep before their eyes, as it were, their own crimes and enormities and to expiate them with tears.

2. AVOIDANCE OF DANGERS OF SIN

To this thought should be joined caution in guarding for the future against every occasion of sin, and against whatever may expose us to the danger of offending God our Father. With this solicitude the mind of David was occupied when he said: "My sin is always before me;" [35] and "Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with my tears." [36]

3. LOVE OF PRAYER

Let each one also call to mind the ardent love of prayer of those who obtained from God through their entreaties the pardon of their sins. Such was the publican, who, standing afar off through shame and grief, and with eyes fixed on the ground, only smote his breast, crying: "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." [37] Such was also the woman, "a sinner," who, standing behind our Lord, washed His feet, wiped them with her hair and kissed them." [38] Lastly, there is the example of Peter, the Prince of the Apostles, who "going forth wept bitterly." [39]

4. USE OF THE SACRAMENTS

They should next consider that the weaker men are, and the more liable to diseases of the soul, which are sins, the more numerous and frequent are the remedies they need. Now the remedies of a sick soul are Penance and the Eucharist; these, therefore, the faithful should frequently make use of.

[35] Ps. l. 5.
[36] Ps. vi. 7.
[37] Luke xviii. 13.
[38] Luke vii. 38.
[39] Matt. xxvi. 75.

5. ALMSDEEDS

Next almsdeeds, as the Sacred Scriptures declare, are a medicine suited to heal the wounds of the soul. Wherefore, let those who desire to make pious use of this prayer act kindly to the poor according to their means. Of the great efficacy of alms in effacing the stains of sin, the angel of the Lord in Tobias, holy Raphael, is a witness, who says: "Alms deliver from death, and the same is that which purgeth away sins, and maketh to find mercy and life everlasting." [40] Daniel is another witness who thus admonished King Nabuchodonosor: "Redeem thou thy sins with alms, and thy iniquities with works of mercy to the poor." [41]

6. THE SPIRIT OF FORGIVENESS

The best alms and the most excellent act of mercy is forgetfulness of injuries, and good will towards those who have injured us or ours, in person, in property, or in character. Whoever, therefore, desires to experience in a special manner the mercy of God, should make an offering to God Himself of all his enmities, remit every offence, and pray for his enemies with the greatest good will, seizing every opportunity of doing them good. But as this subject was explained when we treated of murder, we refer the pastor to that place.

The pastor ought to conclude his explanation of this Petition with this final reflection, that nothing is, or can be conceived, more unjust than that he, who is so rigorous towards men as to extend indulgence to no one, should himself demand that God be mild and kind towards him.

[40] Tob. xii. 9.
[41] Dan. iv. 24.

Sermons

Forgive Us Our Trespasses

BY THE VERY REV. BEDE JARRETT, O.P.

PARABLE OF THE INSOLVENT DEBTOR

The parable of the two debtors seems too fantastic for reality yet remains a perpetual reminder of what is too often our normal attitude to life. We imagine that no one could quite be as evil-minded as the forgiven debtor, and find, to our shame, that it is of ourselves that the tale is told. Notice that the first debtor owes his king ten thousand talents, which is a sum of money so gigantic as to be equivalent in our money to somewhere near five million dollars. He could only have got into so large a debt by keeping for his own use tribute intended for the king. He could not really have borrowed it. Yet when the demand is made for its return, he promises repayment, a promise impossible of fulfilment. No man could ever in his senses expect to be believed when he undertakes to repay such a sum if he is for this once set free. Even, so, however, the merciful lord, "moved with pity, let him go and forgave the whole debt." Of course, there was not much good doing anything else than forgive the whole debt, if the man was to be set free, for the debt was, as we have said, too immeasurably great for it ever to be within the servant's power to make good the loss to his lord. But this servant, leaving the presence chamber finds a fellow servant who owes him but one hundred pence, quite a reasonable sum, though, of course, by no means a small one; this sum he promptly demands and threatens the rigors of the law till payment is made, and when it cannot be made, actually, despite every appeal, couched, too, in language identical with his own, but lately used to his lord, cast him into prison until the debt is paid. Notice, therefore, (a) the first servant owes a debt he cannot repay, promises repayment, and is forgiven, and (b) the second servant owes a debt he could in time (and does)

repay, promises repayment if left in peace at home, and is cast into prison and the home destroyed. It is only reasonable, therefore, that the story concludes with the swift punishment of the wicked servant and his just punishment "until he paid all the debt," an ominous date for repayment of five million dollars, that seems impossible even in eternity.

APPLICATION

Does this sound too fantastic for reality, overdrawn, too highly colored? "So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you, if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts." Our Lord thought it could be paralleled in life even amongst His disciples and Apostles who had already been with Him close upon three years. Let us look to our lives for we shall see the story re-enacted, and what is more important discover the great Christian principle by which our lives should be lived. About us, then, is the parable told. Of course God is the great King and we are all His servants. Well, when He begins to take His account what shall we find that we owe Him? Everything. He created us, redeemed us, sanctified us. All that we have and are is His by that triple bond. How much have we repaid Him? Precious little. But we have gone to our confessions time and again and made all sorts of promises of what valiant things we are going to do, our marvelous resolutions that would edify the angels of God if they could only be got to believe in them. Well, how does the King treat us? Nay, call Him by His real name, how does Love treat us? "Love hopeth all things, believeth all things." And so the immeasurable debt beyond all repayment is forgiven, and we go out from the Presence Chamber of Love cleansed and free. Just outside its door is our fellow servant, who owes us something. He has been unjust or impatient or spiteful, has ill-treated us in some way, been disobedient, forgetful, ill-mannered; what is our attitude? We are hurt and impatient, keep our rancor against him, and even if we don't actually plot revenge are in the state of mind that knows not perfect forgiveness. Yet contrast his duty

to us and our duty to God. We owed God more than we could repay. We promised blindly to repay everything. We were forgiven. Now our fellow servant owes us very little and it is really in his power more or less to set right the mischief he has done. Yet we have no compassion and no forgiveness. We are censorious, insist on his shortcomings which are real, gossip about his behavior, taunt him with his failures, count up his falls. Is it to be wondered at that the Lord is angry with us unless we forgive every one his brother from our hearts, and threatens us with the proper punishment till our debt is itself repaid?

CONCLUSION

Note then the principle of Christian forgiveness. We are never to measure our forgiveness of the injuries of others by the amount of their trespass against us. That is no fair standard of judgment. But if we wish to arrive at a workable principle, we can only arrive at this, that we are to measure the forgiveness we are to give to others by the forgiveness we have received from God. How has God forgiven me? Absolutely and beyond desert because I owed Him everything. How then must I forgive others? Absolutely and beyond desert. Oh, but they have done me immeasurable injury; and I am not sure whether if I forgive them they won't repeat their act. Is there not a point beyond which forgiveness of others becomes weakness and a crime? I certainly hope not, for I want always to be able to be forgiven by God. "Shall I forgive my neighbor seven times a day?" asks poor impetuous St. Peter, aghast at the splendor of charity demanded of him. "Nay, seventy times seven," was the answer, namely, as often and as fully as God has forgiven you. So the principle works in a double fashion. (1) I forgive as I have been forgiven; (2) because I forgive, I shall be forgiven myself. Hence, then, our Lord puts on our lips that solemn and terrible sentence, that His Heavenly Father should measure justly His forgiveness of us by the measure of our forgiveness of others, a daring request which sets against us a very

fierce judgment unless we forgive every one his brother from our hearts.

The Unmerciful Servant

BY THE REV. CHARLES PLATER, S.J., M.A.

INTRODUCTION

St. Peter one day asked our Lord a question. He wanted to know how many times he should forgive a brother who had offended him. And instead of waiting for an answer (impetuous Peter, as usual), he made a suggestion of his own. He thought that to forgive an offensive person seven times would be a very generous allowance. And so it would, my brethren, in the eyes of the world. Even the Jewish teachers recommended that the wrong-doer should only be forgiven three times. And even if this limited ration of forgiveness were universally allowed, the world would be a more peaceful place than it is. We ourselves are, perhaps, apt to grow impatient at the first repetition of a fault which we have brought ourselves to forgive. Peter's "seven times" might well seem a strain on human endurance.

But our Lord's ways are not our ways. How did *He* answer the question.

"No," He said, "not seven times; but seventy times seven times"—that is to say an indefinite number of times. In other words, Jesus tells us that we have no right *ever* to withhold our forgiveness: and He makes this clear by telling the story of the merciless servant—the story which you have just heard read.

This is a hard saying; not hard to understand, for its meaning is perfectly clear, but hard to live up to. It is a staggering blow between the eyes of the world's philosophy. It scatters poor Peter's generous arithmetic. It upsets all Jewish casuistry and baffles the highest aspirations of human nature.

EXPLANATION OF THE PARABLE

If we wish to be Christians we must grasp the meaning of this answer. Do we realize it? It means that we must *never* refuse

to forgive. It is simply not our business to refuse forgiveness, and this follows from our very nature as creatures of God.

The parable makes the reason plain to see.

A king takes an account of his servants. He finds that one of them owes him ten thousand talents—several million dollars. The man cannot pay. He is condemned to slavery. He begs for time. He does not ask to be let off one cent, but he asks for time. The king is moved with pity and forgives the debt. In a moment it is wiped out and done with.

The man, forgiven, goes out. The first person he meets is a fellow servant who happens to owe him just a few dollars—less than one millionth part of what he himself had just been let off. What happens? Is the second debtor let off? Is he even given time? Does he get, as we say, even a dog's chance? No, before he can get out a word he finds himself seized by the throat and hears the merciless words "Pay what thou owest." On his knees he gasps out an appeal—in the very words used a few moments before by the man who was strangling him:

"Have patience and I will pay thee all."

And for answer he finds himself cast into prison.

The other servants are "very much grieved." They are sickened and upset by such revolting callousness shown by one who had just been forgiven.

They tell the king. The king sends for the merciless man. "Thou wicked servant. I forgave you all your debt simply for the asking. Shouldst thou not then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?" This time there is no forgiveness. The man is delivered, not this time merely to slavery but to torture.

And then come the terrible words that should make us hang our heads and beat our breasts; words all the more terrible because spoken by the meek and humble-hearted Shepherd of our souls who bruised not the broken reed nor quenched the smoking flax:

"So also shall my Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every one his brother from your hearts."

FORGIVENESS COMMANDED

Notice that this whole-hearted forgiveness is not a Counsel of Perfection. It is not something that we can take or leave. Our Lord does not say: "If you forgive like this you will be especially pleasing to my Father." He says that if we do *not* forgive, our Heavenly Father will deliver us to torture until we pay all the debt—that is to say, forever, since we can never of ourselves pay the debt of sin.

Now let us take this parable as a mirror and see ourselves reflected in it.

HOW THE COMMAND IS REALIZED

From time to time my Lord God calls upon me in a special way for an account. He sends me a sickness or a sorrow, or He scares me with the thought of Hell, or He gives me light during my prayer so that I may get a glimpse of my sins. He frightens me out of my false security. He *sends for me* who am His servant.

(a) And so I come and kneel at the feet of a priest in the confessional, and I know that I am kneeling at the feet of Christ Himself. I confess my debt and I say—what do I say? "Have patience and I will pay thee all?" Surely not that. If I am wise I say: "God, Master, I am bankrupt, I simply cannot pay. My debt is beyond all counting. I cannot answer thee one thing in a thousand. Forgive me, Lord of Mercy, and in future I will try to be more merciful to my fellow servants, to my fellow men."

Of course we cannot pay. Our debt is greater than we know. The Parable when it speaks of ten thousand talents means a debt that simply could not be paid. The servant thought that he *could* pay if only he had time. He did not realize how big the debt was. He did not realize how much he had been let off. And so he was less grateful than he should have been. Had he grasped the truth that much was forgiven him he might have loved much. And his love would have overflowed onto his fellow servant and he would have been saved from his crime.

(b) Is it not sometimes so with us? We go forth from the

Lord's presence, from the confessional where we have just had our immense debt forgiven. We do not stop to think what a tremendous transaction it has been, how we have been saved by sheer mercy from utter ruin. Our hearts are not brimming with thankfulness and with desire to pass on what we have received. And so when we meet a fellow man, we remember that we have something against him—a mere trifle, a hundred pence at most. He has sneered at us, perhaps, or cut us out in business or thrust himself before us or spoken unkindly of us; or perhaps it is simply that his manner annoys us and he gets on our nerves. He has not wronged us as we have wronged God. Yet our pride springs up at once. We seize him, as it were, by the throat. We pass sentence on him then and there. "Pay what thou owest." He must smart for it. We shall put him in his right place. "I will teach him a lesson."

"Thou wicked servant," says Christ our Master to us. "Thou wicked servant. I forgave thee all the debt because thou besoughtest me: shouldst thou not then have had compassion also on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?" Our merciful Lord is angry with us. He was not angry when we knelt at His feet with a debt of ten thousand talents on our shoulders. He is angry now because, ourselves forgiven, we forgive not others. He talks of tortures and all the debt. Does this mean purgatory? It may mean Hell.

No, it will not do. We must forgive—forgive, as He says, from our hearts: not a cold form of words but steadily with our wills: forgive again and again, if need be; not seven times but always. We are not judges of each other. We are fellow servants of a just and merciful God.

TWO DIFFICULTIES

(a) "But," you will say, "am I always to let everybody off? Am I never to punish others?"

My brethren, it may be your duty to reprimand and to punish. It may be even your duty to be angry. But it is never your duty to withhold forgiveness, never your duty to be spiteful, never your duty to hate. You must forgive even when you have to punish.

(b) Another difficulty is this. Men will tell us that they cannot help feeling hateful towards particular people or classes. That may be true. We cannot always help our feelings, though we should take measures to curb them. People may get on our nerves. We may feel ourselves boiling with resentment. But remember that sin is not in the *feelings* but in the *will.*

Here then is a great Christian precept. If we are not making an effort to observe it, can we dare to say daily to Our Father: "Forgive us our trespasses *as we forgive them* that trespass against us?"

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FEAST OF ALL SAINTS

SUBJECT

THE BEATITUDES

TEXT

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are the meek: for they shall possess the land, etc.—Matt. v. 2 ff.

Analysis

Introduction. In the beautiful Sermon on the Mount our Divine Lord gave us a compendium of the whole Gospel, and an outline of the exalted principles which prevail in His king-

dom, as contrasted with the principles of the world. And not only did He lay down His heavenly maxims, but He also pointed out the supreme spiritual fruits that result to the soul from following His lofty standards of conduct and from the indwelling of His Holy Spirit. These ripest fruits of the Holy Ghost within the soul are summed up in the Beatitudes, and are manifested especially in the lives of the saints. Most appropriately, therefore, has the Church appointed this sublime Gospel for our instruction on the Feast of All Saints.

I. **The first three Beatitudes.** 1. A Beatitude is a superior act of virtue, springing from the gifts of the Holy Ghost, to which a special reward both here and hereafter is promised. A Beatitude differs from a mere fruit of the Divine Spirit in this that it is more perfect, more excellent, more exquisite; it is the ripest fruit of the Holy Ghost, containing within it such sweetness as to be a foretaste of heavenly joy. The Beatitudes are an epitome of the whole Gospel, and show in what the Christian, as opposed to the non-Christian, should seek his happiness. 2. The first three Beatitudes are opposed to those who place their happiness in earthly pleasures. (a) Many put their happiness in honors, in riches; but our Lord declared: "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; that is, happy are those whose hearts are detached from the perishable goods of this earth, even though they possessed them, for they shall receive abundance and glory in heaven. (b) Others find their happiness in earthly conquests and domination, to secure which they must conquer their fellows; but our Lord said: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land"; that is, happy are they who conquer themselves, especially by repressing anger, envy, revenge, and the like, for they shall hold without fear of loss the land of the living, eternal good. (c) Many seek consolation against the labors and sorrows of life by chasing after earthly pleasures; but Christ declared: "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted"; that is, happy are those who shed

tears of contrition for their sins, tears of resignation, etc., for God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and neither mourning nor sorrow shall be any more (Apoc. xxi. 4).

II. **The fourth and fifth Beatitudes.** 1. The fourth and fifth Beatitudes are opposed to those who fail in justice or charity to their neighbor. 2. Many persons are unjust to their neighbors and cheat and defraud them, in order that they themselves may abound with plenty; but our Lord said: "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall have their fill"; that is, happy are those who ardently desire to be just to everyone, because they shall be satiated with everlasting joys. 3. Many are lacking in works of mercy out of fear that they themselves shall come to want; but Christ declared: "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy"; that is, happy are those who succor the poverty and distress of their neighbor, for God will protect them from evil.

III. **The last three Beatitudes.** 1. The sixth and seventh Beatitudes are opposed to those who seek a merely external purity and peace, while neglecting the heart and soul. (a) The world is satisfied with merely external decency and propriety; but Jesus said: "Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God"; that is, happy are those whose purity extends even to their thoughts and desires, for they shall be endowed with superior vision of mind here, and with a more ample knowledge of God hereafter. (b) The world is satisfied with a peace that is only outward and apparent; but our Lord declared: "Blessed are the peace makers, for they shall be called the children of God"; that is, happy are those who work for that interior peace of the heart which surpasseth all understanding, for they become in a special manner like to God. 2. The eighth Beatitude is a confirmation and manifestation of the other seven, for from the fact that one is confirmed in poverty of spirit, in meekness, etc., he will not depart from these virtues on account of persecution. The world regards human favor and popularity as precious attainments, but Jesus

said: "Blessed are those that suffer persecution for justice sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven"; that is, happy are those who cling to poverty of spirit, to meekness, and the rest, in spite of persecutions of whatever kind, for they shall obtain the rewards promised to all the Beatitudes.

CONCLUSION. 1. Everyone naturally desires happiness, but few know how to find it. The world points out one pathway to happiness, namely, through riches, honors, pleasures, etc., and the majority go that way. Christ in the Beatitudes points out another and contrary path, which is the only true way. 2. The people of the world look down upon the meek, the lowly, the humble, etc., forgetting the words of Christ: "Unless you become as little children you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii. 3). 3. Contrast the lot of the Saints, who followed the Beatitudes, with that of the worldling, who seeks happiness in gratifying his passions (Wisdom v. 1 ff). 4. Even in this life true peace is enjoyed only by those who follow the maxims of Christ.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part I

(See Third Sunday after Easter in Dogmatic Series)

Sermons

THE FEAST OF ALL SAINTS—THE BEATITUDES

BY THE REV. C. M. THUENTE, O.P.

JESUS PREACHING ON THE MOUNT

Two thousand years ago Jesus, the divine Preacher, stood on the mountain—the greatest pulpit—and preached to the multitude coming from near and far the most important and the most beautiful sermon that has ever been heard on earth. Opening His mouth He taught them saying, "Blessed"—and again "Blessed"—and a third time "Blessed." Eight times He repeated that little, sweet, significant word "Blessed." He

meant to say: "I see your hearts, I know your deepest longing, I sympathize with you. You seek happiness, the happiness for which you were created, the happiness without which you cannot rest." He meant to say: "Come to Me. . . . Listen to Me. . . . I come to make you happy. . . . I preach to teach the way of happiness. . . . I am the way. . . . I lead to perfect and eternal happiness."

JESUS CROWNING IN HEAVEN

To-day on this feast of All Saints we see Christ, the King of glory, sitting at the right hand of the Father Almighty surrounded by a vast multitude of blessed souls. "I saw a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations and tribes and peoples and tongues, standing before the throne, and in sight of the Lamb, clothed with white robes and palms in their hands: and they cried with a loud voice saying, 'Salvation to our God who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb. . . . Benediction and glory and wisdom, and thanksgiving, honor, and power, and strength to our God forever and ever, Amen'" (Apoc. vii. 9-12). These saints are shining in glory, in that new Jerusalem, enjoying absolute beatitude, singing canticles of gratitude because they realize fully the wisdom of the doctrine Jesus preached on the mount when He said, "blessed, blessed, blessed." They listened to His teaching; they believed it; they admired it; they practiced it; and they are blessed—eternally blessed.

We, dear friends, long for that celestial beatitude. Christ wants us to enjoy that beatitude. Let us study His words, Let us imitate His example that even in this world we may get a foretaste of that blessedness, and that in the next world we may enjoy it to the fullest extent.

"BLESSED ARE THE POOR, THE MEEK, AND THEY THAT MOURN"

That is a new doctrine—a strange doctrine. It differs from and contradicts the doctrine of the world. The vast majority of men at all times, especially in our days, think that happiness is found in money. They rush and run, they toil and

sweat to add dollar to dollar, to add fortune to fortune, to pile it up, to acquire millions. Some fail and are discontented, restless and envious. Others lose their fortune and are heart-broken. Others get rich, love their riches and have them well secured. Are they happy, dressed in soft garments, living in palaces, spending their money in idleness and in feasting? Occasionally, even frequently, we see health ruined, minds wrecked, homes broken up by divorce, names disgraced by the scandals of idle sons and daughters. What mysteries and miseries are hidden in such mansions and palaces! "Woe to the rich." "Woe to riches."

"Blessed are the poor." Believe Jesus and imitate Jesus, poor from the cradle to the cross. Labor diligently. Work is a duty; work is a blessing. Make money and save it to support yourself and your own. If you make enough to supply your needs, be satisfied. "Having food, and wherewith to be covered, with these we are content," writes St. Paul to Timothy (1 Tim. vi. 8). If wealth abounds, become not the slaves of it but use it to do good.

Many of the saints took the advice of Jesus literally and sold what they had and gave it to the poor. "Owners of lands and houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold, and laid it down before the feet of the apostles" (Acts iv. 34, 35). All the Saints had hearts perfectly detached, and trampled upon the goods of the world, and stretched forth their clean and innocent hands to higher, better and mightier things; and they were blessed here and are blessed now in heaven.

Blessed are the meek. Is there a blessedness in meekness? Is meekness not weakness? The world says, "Seek your own; assert yourself; advance yourself; adore yourself; win honors and fame and a great name; assume authority and be under no authority; rule, not your passions, but your fellowmen and rule them with an iron hand."

Jesus ascends the mountain and stands there before the whole world and says, "Blessed are the meek." Jesus was meek as a lamb in all His dealings with people. He blessed them when they sang their hosannas; He prayed for them

when they shouted, "Crucify Him." Jesus was meek as a lamb towards His disciples. He blessed Peter when Peter professed his faith in His divinity, and had compassion on Peter when Peter denied Him repeatedly. Jesus, meek and humble of heart, conquered the hearts of men. He draws all hearts to Himself; He possesses the land.

All the glorious Saints in heaven adored that meek and humble Heart by imitating the meekness of that Sacred Heart, and they found happiness. Moses, the meekest of all men on the face of the earth, led a whole nation through a desert. Stephen, meekly dying, praying for his enemies, changed a Saul into a Paul. The selfish, unmortified, domineering are much despised by men and become the slaves of their own uncontrolled passions, and are cast out like a Lucifer, possessing nothing but their own misery. The words of Jesus, "Blessed are the meek for they shall possess the land," are, as we learn from experience, universally and eternally true.

The man, who, under the gentle and powerful influence of Him who had not where to lay His head, can stand in the midst of riches,—in the midst of men who run after riches, without desiring to possess them, is wonderfully great. The man, who, following the inspirations of the Lamb, mortifies his passions and keeps them under control and makes his soul lamb-like and gentle, is amiable and powerful; but the man who imitates the children of the world whose aim is power, fame and conquest, is not blessed.

"Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Mourning is as universal as sorrow; but not all mourning is the fruit of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The children of the world mourn because the idol they adore, the idol which is "self" suffers loss of health or wealth, honor or comfort. "A voice in Rama was heard, lamentation and great mourning: Rachel bewailing her children, and would not be comforted." The children of God mourn, principally, because the God whom they love and adore is offended. Mortified and sanctified souls, enlightened by the Spirit of light, see their sinfulness and mourn like a Mary Magdalen; they feel at times how miserable and helpless they are without Him, and

they mourn and seek Him sorrowing, as the Blessed Mother sought Jesus when lost in the Temple. They realize the sad and sinful lives of those near and dear to them, walking blindly on the broad way to hell, and they mourn somewhat like Jesus mourned when He wept and prayed in the garden of Olives. Such mourning is the sweet and precious fruit of the purest love of God. Blessed, thrice blessed are they! Such mourning cures the wounds caused by sin and atones for the sins of fellowmen. Blessed, thrice blessed are those who feel such a sorrow, such a sadness! Such mourning leads to God and ends in comfort. Such mourners find Jesus forgiving their sins. They find Jesus teaching in the temple of their hearts. They find Jesus leading them from the garden of agony to the paradise of heaven where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and death shall be no more, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow shall be any more, for the former things are passed away" (Apoc. vii. 17).

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER JUSTICE"

All souls naturally seek happiness—endless happiness, heaven, God. But the way to heaven is unknown to many. To-day the Church points to the vast multitudes who are in heaven, and tells us that they reached that blessed state by taking the way, the name of which is Jesus, "I am the way," "follow Me" (John xiv. 6). He calls blessed on earth and blessed in heaven those who are strictly just and merciful towards their neighbor.

In the Old Testament, on Mount Sinai, the great God of thunder and lightning said, "Thou shalt not steal." Now Jesus sends the Spirit of love into the very hearts of men Who creates there a longing, a hunger, a thirst for justice.

The world is money-mad, and in that blind passionate madness it has no regard for the name and property and well-being of others. It does not fear the just judgment of God who said: "Thou shalt not steal." It does not heed the promise of Christ that the just shall have their fill. Blindly it serves mammon and adores the golden calf.

The Saints in heaven followed the law of Jesus: "all things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do ye also to them" (Matt. vii. 12); and they had their fill. How condescending and kind was Jesus to Zacheus. "Zacheus, make haste and come down, for this day I must abide in thy house" (Luke xix. 5). Christ invited Himself to be Zacheus' guest and to bring salvation to his house. When the people murmured, Zacheus explained and said: "Behold, Lord, half of my goods I give to the poor, and if I have wronged any man of anything I restore him fourfold" (Luke xix. 8). Christ blessed the justice of His host. His justice filled his house with divine blessing.

Dear friends, obey God, imitate the Saints, and find your fill of blessedness in being just, honest and honorable. To be poor is no disgrace; whereas to have an unjust dollar is always a disgrace. To possess unjust goods is a misfortune; to have a good name is always a great fortune. "Whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them" and the Lord Jesus will enter your humble homes and bring salvation to your hearts.

"BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL"

The Holy Spirit urges a soul to go even beyond the laws of justice to practice mercy. "Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy." "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth," was the law of the ancients and remains the law of those who possess not the Spirit. This hard, cold, cruel law Jesus condemned. "I tell you that unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 20). All those who have His Spirit must be merciful in forgiving. "Love your enemies: do good to them that hate you: and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you" (Matt. v. 44). Do this and remember the reward, "they shall obtain mercy." The mercy of God we all need. It is our only hope of salvation. He will forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us. We must show mercy in judging

others: "Why seest thou the mote in thy brother's eye, and seest not the beam in thy own eye?" If the devil tempts you to judge without reason and to condemn without mercy, remember the consequences, "with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged" (Matt. vii. 2). Be merciful to all whom you find wounded in body or soul, on the way to the heavenly Jerusalem, and you will soon experience the truth of the words, "Blessed are the merciful." It is in the performance of self-sacrificing, heroic deeds of mercy that we find the merciful Saviour.

What a blessing for the world is such a just and merciful man! During the year we celebrate the feasts of many holy Confessors who excelled in justice and mercy, and having called to mind their merciful deeds we sing or say: "The Lord leads such a just man straight onward and shows unto him the kingdom of God; such a just man grows like a lily, and blossoms eternally before the face of the Lord; such a just man blossoms like a palm in the house of the Lord." All the marble altars and statues, all the lilies and roses and the decorations of the church and the sanctuary, are nothing in comparison with the presence of a man great in justice and great in mercy. May the number of such men be multiplied like the cedars of Libanus!

"BLESSED ARE THE CLEAN OF HEART." "BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS"

Here, my friends, notice and try to grasp fully the newness, the depth, the sublimity, the divinity of the doctrine, of the religion of Jesus Christ. He is not satisfied with external actions or beautiful words; He wants the heart, the very life of the heart. To avoid adultery and fornication is not enough. That may be inspired by pride or fear. The very heart must not lust. To pray, to give alms, to fast is not enough. Those acts, in themselves religious, may be poisoned by self-love and pride, and make a man a hypocrite, a whited sepulchre, a cup cleaned on the outside, but within full of rapine and uncleanness. "Blessed are the clean of heart." "Blessed are the

peacemakers." Jesus wants the heart to be the very temple of the Holy Ghost.

To reach the very heart of man, to make it clean and to make it peaceful, He abolished the Testament of the law, for the law failed to change the heart, and inaugurated the New Testament of grace. He sends the Holy Spirit, the *Spiritum Sanctum vivificantem,* the life-giving Spirit, that the soul may be reborn in that Holy life-giving Spirit; that the soul, not acting, but living the Gospel, may grow strong in grace through the Sacraments of Confirmation and the Holy Eucharist. Thus Jesus plants the kingdom of God right in the heart of man, and that "kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost" (Rom. xiv. 17).

This all-penetrating, all-purifying, all-sanctifying religion of Christ makes the soul happy, makes the soul blessed. It produces not a superficial passing animal pleasure like that of eating and drinking and dancing, and of feasting the senses on scenes immoral. The clean heart sees and feels God who is love itself. "I will love him and I will manifest myself to him," says Jesus (John xiv. 21). Oh, how those pure and virgin saints of heaven saw God even in this life! Christ manifested Himself so clearly to them that uneducated women like St. Catherine of Sienna and St. Gertrude became great theologians; that theologians like St. Thomas of Aquino and St. Francis de Sales became holy doctors; that all felt such a joy and peace in seeing and loving God that they longed to live to spread that peace, to be peacemakers; that they longed to die to see that loving God face to face.

"BLESSED ARE THEY THAT SUFFER PERSECUTION"

The worldling is like a reed. He is shaken by the constantly changing movements of passion. The worldling builds his house on sand. It cannot continue long; it cannot withstand the winds and rains and floods of time. The worldling is swept away with the floods as the corrupted in the days of Noe, and is lost, eternally lost, feeling the painfully piercing, almost curs-

ing words of Christ, "Woe to you that are rich . . . woe to you that are filled . . . woe to you that now laugh . . . woe to you when men shall bless you" (Luke vi. 24-26).

The disciples of Christ who hear His doctrine, who live His doctrine, who teach His doctrine, are the wise men who build their houses upon a rock. "The rains fall and the floods come and the winds blow and they beat upon the house, and it falls not; for it is founded upon a rock" (Matt. vii. 25). Behold the triumphant legions of martyrs with their palms of victory in heaven; legions of children led by St. Agnes; legions of virgins led by St. Agatha; legions of young men led by St. Stephen; legions of apostolic preachers of the Gospel led by St. James; countless, endless legions who suffered persecution for justice sake, who died fearlessly and bravely, who dying, conquered the world and the devil; who dying, heard the words of Jesus, "Blessed are the poor—Blessed are ye that hunger—Blessed are ye that weep—Blessed are ye that are cast out—Be glad, rejoice, your reward is great in heaven."

The Evangelical Counsels; the Eight Beatitudes

by the rev. thomas j. gerrard

the counsels of perfection

One of the most elementary and most evident facts of the spiritual life of the Catholic Church is the great variety in the goodness of her children. There is a clean line drawn between what is sinful and what is not sinful. This line is represented by the Ten Commandments. The various acts which the Church considers to be sinful are grouped in ten divisions, as it were, which divisions are named after the commandments of the old law. According to the nature and circumstances of the various sins they have different degrees of malice, and may be either mortal or only venial. But however venial or slight a sin is the Church can never tolerate it. According to her teaching there is no temporal calamity which can be counted as bad as the smallest sin. Here, then, is the limit

which the Church has set to the action of her children: they must keep within the law which forbids sin.

On the other hand, the Church places no limit as to the degree of goodness at which her children may aim. Nay, she provides for them a way which, if followed, leads to the highest degrees of holiness. Those who live striving merely to avoid sin are said to be following the way of the Commandments. Those who strive to lead a higher life are said to be following the counsels of perfection. They are indeed obeying the commandments of Christ, but such commandments are of a different nature from the Ten Commandments of the law. To disobey the latter would be sin; to disobey the former would be no sin. The command to enter and follow the way of perfection partakes rather of the nature of an invitation in so far as any punishment is concerned for the non-acceptance of the invitation. It is against all sense of justice to punish a person for not availing himself of a privilege. But when there is a question of reward for the obedience of the command, then the call to the higher life may be looked upon as a commandment. A commandment implies obedience, and obedience implies merit. For the sake of the merit, therefore, we enter upon the way of perfection. We regard ourselves as the subjects of our Lord and Master, and as such we submit to His higher commandments: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind. This is the greatest and the first commandment. And the second is like to this: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

Here, then, we have two general principles which are to be as guiding lights along the narrow way: love of God and love of our neighbor. But Christ does not leave us merely with general principles. He comes to us with a truth, and also with a way and a life. He shows us the way by applying truth to life. The three evangelical counsels and the eight beatitudes are an unfolding of the two great commandments.

The Church provides special means for the carrying out of the counsels to the highest degree possible. She has arranged those wonderful institutions which we recognize as religious

orders and congregations. There the practice of poverty, chastity and obedience takes place under special vows. The rules of the respective orders are so many external graces helping the members to practice the virtues. But these virtues are by no means confined to the religious orders. When a good soul, whether in religion or in the world, has once resolved to strive for something better than merely abstaining from sin, he has entered upon the perfect way, and he may avail himself of the helpful counsels of our Lord.

POVERTY

The first of these counsels is that of poverty. Christ loves with a special predilection those to whom He offers this counsel. The young man of the Gospel had asked what he might do to receive life everlasting. Christ had reminded him of the Ten Commandments. All these, the young man declared, he had observed from his youth. Then did our Lord call him to the way of the counsels, beginning with that of holy poverty. "And Jesus, looking on him, loved him and said to him: One thing is wanting unto thee: go, sell whatsoever thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

"Follow *me*." The counsel is to imitate the poverty of Jesus himself. He has passed through all the experiences of Bethlehem and Nazareth. Nay, He has left heaven itself, "who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant." The virtue of poverty is interpreted in different ways, both within and without the religious orders. But whatever outward form the virtue takes, whether it is not having money, whether in wearing rough clothes, whether in eating plain food, whether in devoting one's riches to religious purposes, all these are but the means of giving expression to the spirit of detachment in which the essence of the virtue consists. The object of holy poverty is to enable those professing it to love God more and to love their neighbor more. They must, therefore, be able to say with St. Peter: "Behold we have left all—and

have followed thee;" which being interpreted is: "We have turned away our minds and our hearts from all that could stand between us and thee."

CHASTITY

The counsel of chastity must be clearly distinguished from the Sixth Commandment. It means much more. The Sixth Commandment forbids all sins against holy purity. This implies a certain amount of self-control, a self-control moreover in one of the strongest appetites in human nature. Now the counsel of chastity goes so far as to require abstinence even in the things which are lawful. The holy Sacrament of Matrimony provides a state of life for those who are not fitted for this abstinence. But for those who feel called to the renunciation of the joys of wife and children there is provided the religious state. It is possible for people to take the vow of chastity outside a religious order. Such, however, are quite exceptional cases. They are very rarely allowed by spiritual directors and should never be undertaken without the consent of one's confessor. Our Lord has said expressly that this renunciation is a special gift of God, nor is it given to everyone. "All men take not this word, but they to whom it is given. . . . He that can take, let him take it." The vow is taken in order to enable the person to love more. And love is will-power in action. It is not, therefore, the mere physical state of remaining unmarried which makes the vow of chastity so beautiful, but rather the will-power or the love which is required in order to maintain such a state faithfully.

OBEDIENCE

Holy obedience completes the triple cord. If poverty is characterized by strength of will in one direction, and chastity in another, obedience is characterized by strength of will in all directions. It implies acts of self-denial at every turn in life. Its perfection, of course, is obtained in a religious order where the subject yields his own will to that of his superior. But the virtue itself can be practiced by all, whether lay or religious.

The life of Christ is the pattern for all; and Christ "was made obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross." Here again we must distinguish clearly between the way of the commandments and the way of perfection. The due observance of the law is obedience, but not the counsel of perfection. The counsel of perfection means obedience in things in which we are not bound to obey. In the religious this takes place chiefly in the act by which he surrenders himself to his order. In the secular it is in those manifold acts in which he conforms to the wishes of superiors even though he knows that the superiors could not or would not enforce their wishes.

FIRST BEATITUDE

The first beatitude emphasizes the root meaning of holy poverty. "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." This blessing is offered to the millionaire even as the crossing-sweeper, yea, and to the crossing-sweeper even as to the millionaire. The amount of one's wealth in hard cash is only an accident of the virtue of holy poverty. The millionaire may have the poverty of spirit, while the crossing-sweeper may be devoid of it. The virtue consists in the attitude of mind and in one's moral conduct in regard to material wealth. Am I so absorbed in the quest for wealth, am I so taken up with "the bewitching of trifle," am I so dissatisfied with my social position, that I have no time for the thought of things of heaven? If so, then, of necessity mine is not the kingdom of heaven. Only when one has recognized what is meant by the right use of worldly possessions, that they are to be held as so many talents lent by God, that they are to be devoted to the service of God, that they are to be devoted to ourselves only in so far as they help us in God's service, only then can one realize that poverty of spirit is the condition of enjoying life in the kingdom of heaven. The first beatitude, therefore, proclaims the law by which spiritual wealth is obtained, namely by detachment and renunciation of inordinate desire for temporal wealth.

SECOND BEATITUDE

The second beatitude proclaims the counterpart to this law: "Blessed are the meek, for they shall possess the land." It is those who are strong in the spirit, those who have striven for the mastery over self who are the real powers among men. Meekness does not mean weakness or want of character. Our Lord was eternal meekness made manifest in the flesh. Yet, what a command had He over the powers of the world! How His meekness and gentleness baffled the machinations of the scribes and Pharisees! See how perturbed is the high-priest Caiaphas when in answer to the charges Jesus holds His peace! And behold how distressed is the governor Pilate, when in reply to the testimonies brought against Him Jesus answers never a word! The Lamb of God is also the Lion of Judah. Meekness, then, is not callousness of disposition, nor indifference to, nor yet fear of stronger physical power. It is the control of our lower instincts which have a tendency to rebel against all unjust aggression. By exercising this control we manifest a spiritual power mightier than the brute power which is opposed to us. "A soft answer turneth away wrath." By letting our moderation or self-control be known to all men we make them realize that we have a strength which must be respected; by seeking first the kingdom of God and His justice all these things are added unto us; by cultivating the virtue of meekness we come to possess the land.

THIRD BEATITUDE

In the midst, however, of both wealth and poverty, yes, and in the midst of both spiritual riches and spiritual destitution, the angel of sorrow comes to make a sojourn from time to time. He has a holy mission. He brings mourning into every house, because only through mourning can man receive certain blessings which God has in store for him. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." Sorrow is not good in itself. It is only a necessary condition of after good. It is a remedy by which the will is strengthened and directed into

conformity with God's will. In its remedial value, therefore, the blessedness of sorrow consists. The toiling masses need to hear this Gospel preached more and more. Philanthropic effort, social progress, economic evolution will do much to ameliorate the conditions of their life. But always there will be a residue of sorrow remaining. It may be well to have an ideal Utopia at which to aim. It is quite necessary to fix our minds on that heaven where there will be no sorrow, and God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. But never may we forget that here we have no abiding city and that the sorrows which God permits to come to us are providential. They are a beatitude, for they are a condition of the comfort of eternity.

FOURTH BEATITUDE

The blessing of sorrow is, as it were, the blessing which weans us from things of earth. Its function is rather negative than positive, remedial in sickness rather than strong food in health. The next beatitude supposes that we have taken the turn for the better, and helps us to get deeper into the life of the spirit. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice: for they shall have their fill." The inspired writer of the book of Wisdom tells us what this justice is. It is the knowledge of God. "To know thee in perfect justice." We stand on a mountain peak and we watch the ranges of lesser heights roll on to the distant horizon. The view satisfies us because it is something more vast and more majestic than anything we have seen before. Yet at the same time it leaves us longing—we want to know what is beyond the horizon. So is our thirst after the knowledge of God. The more we know, the more we want to know. There is an ever receding "beyond." "He is always above the point of the horizon which we have reached." It is quite right, then, and a healthy sign that we should have theological difficulties. It shows that we are living the life of the spirit within us and that we need to explain that life in intellectual formularies. But we must not be impatient if we only partially succeed. Complete success

only comes by perseverance to the end. The hunger and thirst after justice increase in their intensity according as they are provided with more knowledge. The perfect satisfaction comes only with the light of glory by the aid of which we see God as He is. "For with thee is the fountain of life; and in thy light we shall see the light." "They shall be inebriated with the plenty of thy house and thou shalt make them drink of the torrent of thy pleasure."

FIFTH BEATITUDE

We thus think of God as immeasurably distant from us. The all-satisfying joy is in the future and in the world to come. We must also recognize God in our neighbor, and through the instrumentality of our neighbor we must show our kindness to God if we will avail ourselves of His kindness to us. "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." St. Paul summed up this law very concisely in his letter to the Galatians: "Bear ye one another's burdens; and so fulfil the law of Christ." These words sounded very strange in pagan ears. They did, however, excite interest. But as for some modern Christian ears the words would seem hardly to have reached them. The besetting sin of these "good folk" is to be hard on a fellow sinner. They fondly imagine that because they conform to certain recognized good religious practices which their neighbor ignores that therefore they are the possessors of the blessings of heaven, while their neighbor is destitute of all. Vain imagination! It is only the merciful who shall obtain mercy. The woman who was guilty of adultery found more favor in the eyes of Christ than the unmerciful Pharisee.

SIXTH BEATITUDE

The complement of this generous disposition toward our neighbor is the keeping of a pure heart in order that we may have a clearer vision of God. "Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God." This vision in the present life is only through the aid of earthly shadows and images. But it may

be made ever more and more distinct by the cultivation of purity of heart. The purity of heart here spoken of refers primarily to the avoiding of all sins against the Sixth Commandment. Progress, however, in this direction must, of necessity, lead to a purity of heart in a much wider sphere. The self-conquest needful for the acquisition of the virtue of holy purity induces a habit of mind which regards the whole of life in the light of God's law. It was a holy virgin from whom the Word took flesh and thus came and dwelt among us. Virginity, then, is the symbol of highest chastity. The reality symbolized is cleanliness of mind. "O how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory." The virtue and its reward is the right of the whole generation, young men and maidens, old men and children, the married, the widows and the single. Virginity of mind from this moment henceforth, that is the purity of heart which is the condition of the vision of God.

SEVENTH BEATITUDE

"Blessed are the peace-makers: for they shall be called the children of God." Christ was the great peace-maker. To the woman healed of an issue of blood, trembling and distraught with clashing emotions, He said: "Go in peace and be thou whole of thy disease." And when Mary Magdalen hung back from the accusing presence of the proud Pharisee, Christ said to her: "Thy faith hath made thee safe, go in peace." And again when the disciples were troubled and frightened at His appearance among them after the Resurrection He spoke to them: "Peace be to you, it is I, fear not." As He had come to them so He would have them go to the world. "Into whatsoever house you enter first say: Peace be to this house." In so far, then, as we carry peace to the world we are doing the work of Christ, we are making ourselves worthy to be called the children of God. We must distinguish, however, between true peace and that semblance of peace which is purchased at the cost of principle. Peace does not mean giving in to every strong opposition, right or wrong. Christ counseled no such peace. Even the Prince of Peace said: "I came

not to send peace but a sword." There are occasions when true peace can be obtained only by fighting. And when principle clearly points out such a course of action then the fight must be faced.

EIGHTH BEATITUDE

The last beatitude has been called the beatitude of the saints. "Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justice' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." From the time of St. Stephen until now there have not been wanting those who have been willing to suffer for the faith. Indeed this is the lot of every professing Christian. The difference between the suffering of the great body of the faithful and that of the saints is only one of degree. We have not the privilege now of going to rack, thumbscrew and gibbet, but we have ample opportunity of devoting our time, our substance, our talent for the cause of justice. If we are persecuted in our corporate capacity by governments which take away from us our schools and thus impose upon us the duty of providing other schools we must not shirk the inconveniences which are involved. That is our opportunity of self-sacrifice. The more personal and individual persecution which may come to us from time to time is much more easy to bear, for it carries with it a sense of martyrdom which gives strength and courage. There is more pleasurable excitement in a few days' imprisonment for the sake of the faith than in doubling our subscriptions to voluntary schools for the sake of the faith. The beatitude, however, is only for those who suffer for the sake of justice, not for those who suffer for the sake of their own glory, nor of their own fads, nor of their own eccentricities.

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TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT: OUR DUTIES TO TEMPORAL AUTHORITY

TEXT

Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.—MATT. xxii. 21.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. In the first three Commandments we are told the duties we owe to God. The fourth precept makes us aware of the highest obligations under which we exist in regard to our neighbor, namely, the duties we owe to parents and country. The Gospel of to-day reminds us of the latter of these duties.

The Herodians and Pharisees, who, in other matters, were mortal enemies, had agreed to entrap our Lord, and force Him either to show disloyalty to His own countrymen, or to declare Himself opposed to the Roman authority. They appeared, on the one hand, to be very anxious in their own consciences, and on the other hand, to have highest respect for our Lord, and so they proposed their difficulty. But Jesus, knowing their hypocritical hearts, rebuked them for their cunning purposes and murderous intentions, and bade them render to the civil authority what they owed it, and to the religion of their people what God had commanded them. Thus we are reminded by Christ Himself that we are under obli-

gations not only to God, but also to the state and civil authority which governs us.

I. **The meaning of civil authority.** 1. Civil authority is the power that governs temporal society, *i.e.,* which directs men in their social relations, and protects them in their civil rights. 2. Civil society is the union of many families under the authority of one head for the purpose of assisting each other in securing their mutual perfection and temporal happiness (Catech. of Pius X). 3. The authority which governs the State is from God, because God has established society and the power that rules over it for the common welfare. This is true no matter what form of government a people may adopt, since all authority is from God (Rom. xiii. 1).

II. **Our duties to the civil authority.** 1. The State is not absolute in its power, but is subject to God, who is the source and origin of all right. Hence it follows that there can be no conflict between our duties to God and our duties to the State. God requires that we fulfill our obligations to the civil power, and the civil ruler has no right to ask us to do anything that God forbids (Acts v. 28, 29). 2. We owe our country *love, i.e.,* patriotism, since after God, our parents and relatives, we owe our charity to our fellow countrymen with whom our own temporal welfare is inextricably bound up. Catholics cannot be disloyal to their country, because patriotism is a part of their religion. 3. We owe our country *obedience* to its laws, because this the will of God (Rom. xiii. 1 ff.) and the common good require. 4. We owe *respect* and *honor* to our lawful rulers and magistrates (Rom. xiii. 7), since they hold the place of God in our regard. Citizens are not fulfilling their duty, unless they use every legitimate means in their power to better the condition of their country by seeking the repeal of bad laws and the enactment of good ones, the removal of unworthy office holders, the correction of abuses, etc.

Conclusion. 1. Let us heed the injunction and example of our Lord and be faithful in discharging our duties both to God and to

the State. 2. We should show our patriotism, not so much by flag waving, parades and loud cheering, as by obedience to law, a public spirit, and prayer for the success and prosperity of our country and its people.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

The Honor Due to Civil Rulers

Not only are we obliged to honor and obey our pastors and spiritual superiors, but also our civil rulers, governors, magistrates, and others to whose authority we are subject. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans [1] explains at length the honor, respect and obedience that should be shown them, and he also bids us to pray for them. St. Peter says: "Be ye subject, therefore, to every human creature for God's sake; whether it be to the king as excelling, or to governors as sent by him." [2]

For whatever honor we show them is given to God, since exalted dignity deserves respect because it is an image of the divine power, and in it we revere the providence of God who has entrusted to men the care of public affairs and who uses them as the instruments of His power.[3]

If we sometimes have wicked and unworthy officials it is not their faults that we revere but the authority from God which they possess. Indeed, while it may seem strange, we are not excused from honoring them even when they show themselves hostile and implacable towards us. Thus David rendered great services to Saul even when the latter was his bitter foe, and to this he alludes when he says: "With them that hated peace I was peaceable." [4]

However, should their commands be wicked or unjust, they should not be obeyed, since in such a case they rule not according to their rightful authority but according to injustice and perversity.

[1] Rom. xiii. 1.
[2] 1 Peter ii. 13; see Tertull., Apol. viii. 30, 32; ad Scap. c. 2.
[3] Aug., De civitate Dei, l. 5, cc. 10, 11, 14, 15.
[4] Ps. cxix. 7.

Sermons

Catholicity and Patriotism

BY THE REV. JOHN J. FORD, S.J.

CALUMNIES AGAINST CATHOLICS

It is certain that a Christian must forgive, forgive always, forgive all, forgive everything. The religion which he professes, the Gospel which he venerates, the doctrine which he practices, the image of the crucified God whom he adores makes forgiveness for him an absolute command, ever repeating to him, as they do: "Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you."

Sublime religion of Christ, were there no other proof, this precept alone of the forgiveness of our enemies should suffice for all men to show thee divine! For only a divine religion could impose on our poor human hearts a sacrifice so excruciating as to love even the barbarian who wounds it in its most delicate and sensitive fibers.

We are Catholics, and on account of our religious profession we embrace without exception, and we practice without human respect, all the teachings of the Catholic Church. And for this, for this only, we are branded as enemies of our country by not a few of those who style themselves Christians and Americans.

Enemies of our country, we Catholics? This calumny is too serious, this insult is too great, this wound is too deep. To pardon those who thus outrage us we need all the strength of our Faith and of grace Divine.

This is not the first time, though, in the history of our country that we have been calumniated on this point. During the Know-Nothing excitement which preceded the Civil War, Catholics were on all sides accused of being enemies of the Government and plotting its overthrow. On that occasion Rev. Dr. Charles Constantine Pise, the only priest ever to act as chaplain to the Congress of the United States, wrote in reply a beautiful poem entitled "The American Flag." Dr. Pise

walking down historic Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington, happened to see the flag floating from the Capitol, was inspired by the sight to compose the following poem, the sentiments of which, often felt though never so well expressed, voice the sentiments of every true Catholic, by birth or adoption American.

They say I do not love thee,
  Flag of my native land;
Whose meteor folds above me
  To the free breeze expand,
Thy broad stripes proudly streaming,
And thy stars so brightly gleaming.

They say I would forsake thee,
  Should some dark crisis lower;
That, recreant, I should make thee
  Crouch to a foreign power;
Seduced by license ample,
On thee, best flag, to trample.

They say that bolts of thunder,
  Cast in the forge of Rome,
May rise and bring thee under
  Flag of my native home,
And with one blow dissever
My heart from thee forever.

False are the words they utter,
  Ungenerous their brand;
And rash the oaths they mutter,
  Flag of my native land;
Whilst still in hope above me,
Thou wavest—and I love thee!

God is my love's first duty,
  To Whose eternal name
Be praise for all thy beauty,
  Thy grandeur and thy fame;
But ever have I reckoned
Thine, native flag, my second.

Woe to the foe or stranger
  Whose sacrilegious hand,
Would touch thee or endanger
  Flag of my native land.
Though some would fain discard thee,
Mine should be raised to guard thee.

Then wave, thou first of banners,
And in thy gentle shade,
Beliefs, opinions, manners,
Promiscuously be laid;
And there all discord ended,
Our hearts and souls be blended.

Stream on, stream on before us,
Thou labarum of light
While in one generous chorus
Our vows to thee we plight;
Unfaithful to thee—never!
My native land forever!

PATRIOTISM IS A RELIGIOUS DUTY

But let us forgive them, and examine the question philosophically. Is Catholicity the enemy of our country? Can one be a good Catholic and a good American citizen?

Love is not only the most delicate and exquisite, but also the most necessary of the affections. For in whatever being there is a will, there must be love. Love, therefore, is found in God and love is found in man, but differently. To love is to wish some good to the object loved. God loves by giving all things their being and infusing into them, as the Supreme Cause of all, the goodness which is the object of His love. Man loves by desiring, willing, and forcing himself to preserve and increase in the object beloved the good that moves his will to love. Hence there can be no rectitude in our act of love unless the goodness of the object correspond or be proportionate thereto.

Consequently to love what is not good or worthy of our love, or to love what is worthy but more than it merits according to reason, is always a reprehensible act, an act not of true but of false love. False love, too, is that which contents itself with barren affections, however tender and ardent; with empty words, however high-sounding and magnificent. No, this is not love, but its counterfeit. For true love wishes the good, the real good, of the object loved and does all it can to procure it. To wish and procure for the object loved a fallacious, dishonest good, a good contrary to the law of God and Reason

is, therefore, not to love truly. This would be hatred rather than love.

The true lover does not seek himself but the object of his love which he studies to benefit by all ways and means, by preserving for it the good it already possesses, and obtaining for it what it still lacks. For the true lover, far from stealing from the object beloved its treasures, far from impoverishing and draining it of his own advantage, generously shares with it what belongs to him and despoils himself to enrich it. For charity, or true love, is unselfish, says St. Paul, "seeketh not her own"; aims at nothing, asks for nothing, longs after nothing but the real good of the object loved. From these characteristics of true love we can judge at first sight the difference between the real lover and the false.

To sum it up, true love is only the love of what is worthy of being loved. True love wishes the beloved only a reasonable and honest good, and it wishes it all the more intensely and abundantly as it sees the beloved more deserving. True love is not contented with mere affections or words, but throws itself generously into deeds, and does not consider its own interest, but that of the beloved. True love is giving, not getting.

To apply this idea of love to our country, who can doubt that our country is worthy, most worthy of our love? For from whatever point of view we regard our country, she offers us the sweetest and tenderest incentives to love. She is the blessed spot of our birth, she guards our cradle, our home, the dear scenes and pastimes of our childhood, the sad headstone under which repose the bones of our father and mother. She is the sweet bond of a family of brothers and sisters that speak the same language, follow the same customs, that share with their whole heart in our joys and our hopes. Our country is the sublime symbol of a nucleus of traditions, some joyful, some sorrowful, all most dear, that through vicissitudes of history have distinguished our people from all the other peoples and nations of the earth, stamping upon their brow a special character that shall never be effaced. Why not then love our country?

LOVE OF GOD AND COUNTRY NOT OPPOSED

Why, indeed, should we not love our glorious country? We certainly do love our country with our whole heart, but we try to love it as it is proper for those to love an earthly country, who look forward to a heavenly country, always mindful that we have not here a lasting city. We can be true Catholics and true Americans, secure that nothing of what we should love and defend with all the strength of our souls as the patrimony of our Mother the Catholic Church can ever harm this other mother of ours—our country—not the doctrine of the Church, not her precepts, or her counsels, or her hierarchy. For as Leo XIII in his famous encyclical "On the Chief Duties of Christians as Citizens," said, "the supernatural love of the Church and the natural love of country are twin loves, daughters of the same eternal principles, God Himself being their sole author and originating Cause."

True, it is the teaching of the Catholic or Universal Church that her children should love all men without distinction of country, speech, nationality or customs, because they are all the image of God, created by God, redeemed by God, and all form one great family of brothers and sisters. Hence no reason could ever justify hatred of his fellow-man by a Christian; so much so that we are commanded to love even our enemies, to do good to those who persecute and calumniate us. And Christ, our Founder, gave a splendid example of this on the Cross when He prayed to the Eternal Father for those that put Him to death. Such is the doctrine of the Catholic Church. Have you ever perchance found it contrary to the love we owe our country? Surely not; for this Catholic principle of universal or cosmopolitan charity does not hinder us in any way from bearing in our hearts a particular love to our own country and to our fellow-citizens.

They will say, perhaps, that many of the laws and precepts of the Church are often in open contradiction to those of country. This is not so in our case. But should it ever happen that an ecclesiastical law did contradict a national law, reason enlightened by faith should infer that the law of secular power

is against the rights of God and opposed to our conscience. In that case ought we not follow the command of Christ: "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that are God's"? And ought we not "obey God rather than men"? Or can a law opposed to God and our conscience bring anything but harm to our country? In such a case, therefore, the ecclesiastical law far from being contrary, would be favorable to the love of our country. And hence Leo XIII could frankly proclaim that "there are no better friends of their country than true Catholics."

Nor are the counsels of the Catholic Church, sacerdotal celibacy, for instance, virginity, and claustral poverty and obedience, an impediment to the love of our country. These counsels were given by Jesus Christ and they are recorded in His Holy Gospel, and through the practice of them the Catholic Church is holy with a holiness not rarely heroic, and always admirable, and fruitful in innumerable advantages to the State itself. But the idolators of the State rise up and falsely accuse Catholics on this account of all sorts of crimes, and among them lack of patriotism.

Scoundrels! Yes, you who have no faith in anything but wealth and pleasure; you, "whose God is your belly"; you, who by calumniating pure men and women do but give to the world a filthy photograph of your own filthy mind; you, who unless you change your ways, shall lie howling when the chaste nuns you slander are ministering angels in heaven as they are now on earth; yes, you can well afford to lie about your neighbor as you do. But do you imagine for a moment that you love your country? You do not love it. For you hate your neighbor, even though he be a fellow-citizen, hate him with a detestable, shameful passion, unworthy of Christians, nay even of civilized and cultured men and noble minds. You hate your neighbor, and therefore you do not love God. For "if any man say, 'I love God,' and hateth his brother, he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God, whom he seeth not?" You do not love God, and therefore you do not love your country truly.

If you only knew the Catholic Church and her priests and

sisters as they are in the Eternal Mind of God and in the lofty minds of many of their fellow-citizens, and not as they are in the small camera of your own little minds, you would surely think, and you might talk, differently. But such a vision, blind ones, is hidden from your eyes and most likely always will be, till you meet the good men and women you have so often maligned here below before the Judgment seat of that just God they are striving to love and serve so well.

Every type of human need has called forth a generous response in the souls of these noble, disinterested men and women. They have undertaken the education and alleviation of all classes of society without distinction of creed. The very deaf mutes have their own congregation of teachers; the aged, the orphans, the foundlings, the sinful, the wayward, the insane, the sick, all have their ministering angels sent to them in human form by God. No part of our vast possessions is too remote, no hardships can intimidate, persecution has no deterring power, the martyr's crown for the faith or for charity or country is eagerly coveted, no sacrifice can be too great for these lovers of the Crucified. It may be the slow martyrdom of a class-room, it may be the care of thankless erring ones fretting against the restraint of salutary rule, it may be the often dangerous attendance on the sick, it may be the daily contact with untutored savages, it may be the climate of the Philippines, or Porto Rico, or Hawaii, or Alaska; what would deter a worldling does but whet the desire of Christ's true followers, for whom to live is Christ, and to die is gain. What would America have been without these real heroes and heroines?

Nor is the hierarchy of the Catholic Church any obstacle to the true love of our country—that venerable hierarchy through which all peoples, all nations, all tongues are united from pole to pole in one profession of faith, one rule of conduct, one cordial obedience. One only is the head, the Supreme Pontiff, who sits at Rome upon the Chair of Peter, and from him as from the heart of the Church through the Bishops, as through so many arteries wisely interlaced and arranged, there flows to all the members, even the last and least, the vivifying

blood of grace, and faith, and hope, and charity. Is the smallest member of this mystical body in sorrow? The Head suddenly feels it, and goes out to that member in sympathy. Is the Head in sorrow? The whole body and each member grieve with him. O hierarchy of the Catholic Church, how I admire thee! How sublime thou art! Truly art thou the work of infinite wisdom, power, and love!

But there exist in the world mean persons, persons who would slink back to their tribe and never strive to rise to the dignity of being, contemptible persons who are incapable of understanding, much less of loving what is truly beautiful with a beauty supernatural and Divine. Such rush like mad dogs upon the Catholic hierarchy, imagining they see in it the most formidable enemy of patriotism. But their fancy and their prejudice and their bigotry blind them. For the obedience of Catholics of whatever race or country to the Roman Pontiff, inasmuch as he is the Vicar of Christ, the Supreme Teacher of faith and morals, regards souls and the spiritual interests of souls, which are above every earthly consideration of race, nationality, kingdom, republic and empire. This obedience, therefore, is altogether different from that which the people of every country owe their temporal rulers in licit matters, civil and political.

How, then, could this kind of obedience be ever hindered or weakened by obedience to the Pope? In one case only could this happen, and that is when the secular power would command a thing against one's conscience. But in this case all matter of obedience by the very nature of the things would cease. For there could be no law then, since the first condition of a law is that it be just, that it do not violate liberty, that it be not oppressive of right, nor opposed to moral and religious duties.

The Pope is a sovereign also, a true sovereign, the sovereign of all peoples, the Father of all, and the authority he exercises is supernational, supermundane, supernatural. The Pope is no foreign prince. He is no alien. He is the Vicar of Christ, Who is over and of all nationalities and countries, yesterday and to-day and forever, and in this sense not only are all Cath-

olics, whatever their race, children of the Pope, but they are also Romans like the Pope who to whatever nationality he may belong personally, is always the Bishop of Rome, the successor of St. Peter.

The Church does not, therefore, in any way oppose true patriotism, and he who says she does utters a barefaced lie. There is a false patriotism, and this she does and always will oppose. This kind of patriotism wishes to one's country an inordinate and fallacious good, and it is treachery. Or it does not wish in reality any good to it, but contents itself with empty words, and it is hypocrisy; or under the pretext of love of country it seeks the satisfaction of its own ambitions, and then it is egotism. Whether egotism or hypocrisy or treachery, whichever of those three it may be, it is a crime against one's country, and not true love thereof.

Whatever our calumniators may say, the true history of our country, whether written by Catholic or non-Catholic, attests that we have been second to none in the love of our country.

Catholics disloyal to America? No! by those of our forefathers in the faith who fought in the fore-front at Bunker Hill, and Lundy's Lane, and Fredericksburg. No! by those other generous souls who were the first to raise both voice and pen against the greatest enemy our flag has yet known—Socialism! No! by the noble sentiments that beat in the bosoms of millions of Catholics here and make them ready at a moment's call from their country to lift up sword or voice or pen in her defence! Those sentiments have all been enshrined by one of our number—James Riley—in the following poem, the finest poem ever written on the American flag.

That ocean-guarded flag of light, forever may it fly!
It flashed o'er Monmouth's bloody fight and lit McHenry's sky;
It bears upon its fold of flame to earth's remotest wave
The name of men whose deeds of fame shall e'er inspire the brave.

Timbers have crashed and guns have pealed beneath its radiant glow,
But never did that ensign yield its honor to the foe!
Its fame shall march with martial tread down ages yet to be,
To guard those stars that never paled in fight on land or sea.

Its stripes of red eternal dyed with heart-streams of all lands;
Its white, the snow-capped hills that hide in storm their upraised hands;
Its blue, the ocean waves that beat round Freedom's circle shore;
Its stars, the print of angel's feet that burn forever more!

Religious and Civil Allegiance

BY THE REV. J. R. NEWELL, O.P.

Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's.—Matt. xxii. 21.

THE GOSPEL OF THE DAY

The Pharisees and the Herodians, the strictest and the loosest of the Hebrew Sects, and implacable enemies of Jesus, combined to compass His ruin by betraying Him into giving a decision on the dangerous question of the tribute.

The payment of the tribute to Rome had long been a settled custom, and the fact that the later Jewish zealots secretly opposed it did not alter nor reopen the case; but the enemies of Jesus laid their snare so that whatever answer He might give to their question they could lay hold of it to His undoing. If He answered in favor of paying the tribute, the Pharisees would urge His words with the people as an attack on their rights; if He answered against the tribute, the Herodians, joined even by the Pharisees, would accuse Him of fomenting rebellion against the Roman State.

Jesus, knowing their thoughts and seeing the snare, ignored the dead issue of Hebrew politics and gave the luminous answer which was thenceforth to guide the conscience of Christians and determine the conduct of His Church in all ages amid the civil governments of the world. And first, to convict His enemies out of their own mouth of hypocrisy and iniquity, He required them to show Him the coin of the tribute; and they showed Him, not the Hebrew drachma sacred to the Temple, but the Roman denarius, or penny. Then He made them openly avow whose were the image and inscription on the pagan coin; and they said: "Caesar's." Then He said: "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

TEACHING OF CHRIST

By this answer Christ declared the spiritual and the civil authorities to be henceforth and forever distinct and separate; and He enjoined obedience to both when their authority is exercised within their proper sphere. The lawful civil authority justly requires our allegiance and obedience only in things temporal and when its laws are not contrary to the truth and law of God. The spiritual authority, invested by Christ in His Church, requires of her children obedience only in things spiritual—in matters of Christian faith, morals and discipline. And this distinction of the two authorities is conformed to the twofold condition of man—to his temporal interests here and his eternal destinies hereafter. For, man is at once a member of organized society—a citizen under the civil government and a subject of Heaven; and wherever this distinction is acknowledged civil and religious freedom are guaranteed.

FALSE DOCTRINES

Pagan Rome had confounded the two authorities and, in the name of an idolatrous State, trampled on the rights of human conscience; but the Christians of every condition throughout the Empire, while dying for their religious allegiance to the truth and law of God, asserted their civil allegiance to the just laws of the State. "We render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, but to God the things that are God's," that is, in all temporal matters of civil right we obey and honor you, but to your impious demand on us of idolatry we answer that "we must obey God rather than man."

The Jewish Sects pursued the early Christians by the same methods by which they attacked the Saviour. They alarmed the Roman Emperors with the suspicion of Christian disloyalty and instigated the most bloody of the persecutions. And at the same time, while the Christian martyrs, true to God and to civil duty, were dying by thousands, the Jews plotted the overthrow of the Roman power and brought upon themselves

the destruction of Jerusalem and the extinction of the Hebrew nation.

Modern Protestant Sects, waiving for the occasion their mutual conflicts, periodically resort to the same mode of attack on the Catholic Church. Jealous of her progress in this country, they seek to arouse the suspicion of the government or of the populace against Catholics as incapable of being at the same time loyal to this country and to the Pope, whom they, with sinister intention, style a "Foreign Potentate"; an appellation meant to mislead, as the Pope is not a civil potentate for us, but the spiritual father of Christians. But the two authorities must be confounded by our maligners before they can attack us with any show of success; and this in spite of the well-known fact of Catholic loyalty everywhere. It is worthy of note that our hypocritical slanderers are, themselves, mostly to be found in the ranks of the secret and turbulent societies which are plotting the overthrow of the civil order and authority in this country; and in this very respect they regard the Catholic Church as their most formidable opponent.

TEACHING OF THE CHURCH

The Catholic Church teaches that God is the Author of human society; that the first necessity of society is the choice and appointment by the community of some men to be a center of civil rule, no matter what form of government the community may adopt; that the chief exercise and scope of the civil power are in legislating for the common good, and ruling in purely temporal matters; that the civil legislative power is founded on the natural and eternal law as it is in the mind of the Divine Author of human society; that it is therefore a participation of the authority of God, and must be obeyed in all temporal matters not contrary to the truth and laws of God, and therefore "he who revolts or plots against the lawful civil power resists the ordinance of God and purchases to himself eternal damnation" (Rom. xiii. 2).

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TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT: THE WORSHIP DUE TO GOD

TEXT

As he was speaking these things unto them behold a certain ruler came up and adored him.—Matt. ix. 18.

Analysis

Introduction. Our Lord had just been replying to the Pharisees, who murmured because He had eaten with the publicans, when Jairus, a ruler of the synagogue at Capharnaum, came up and prostrated himself at His feet, imploring Him to come and save his only daughter who was at the point of death. Jairus in all probability did not intend to show our Lord any higher homage than that customarily shown in the Orient to Prophets and great personages. From this most respectful attitude, however, on the part of a Jew, who was also probably a Pharisee, and did not recognize the Divinity of Christ, we Christians, who know that Jesus is true God, should learn

how properly to honor Him in the Eucharist, and how to worship the Divine Majesty in our words and actions.

I. **What the First Commandment requires.** 1. This Commandment implicitly bids us to *worship* God, that is, to believe in Him, hope in Him, love Him and adore Him. (We are concerned at present only with the worship of God, and not with the theological virtues of faith, hope, and charity, which are treated on other Sundays.) 2. Worship, or the virtue of religion, regulates those actions by which we honor and glorify God, such as adoration, prayer, sacrifice, and the like. This worship is twofold: (a) internal, *i.e.,* in the mind and heart; (b) external, *i.e.,* manifested in the actions and movements of the body, or by sensible objects, such as genuflexions, ceremonies, and the like. 3. Internal worship of God is the more important, since the value of our actions depends chiefly on our intention, motives, etc. External worship is also necessary, because we owe God the homage not only of our souls, but of our bodies as well, and because it intensifies our own piety and assists the piety of others.

II. **Motives for worshipping God.** 1. From the words of the First Commandment we learn the chief motives that should prompt our worship of God, namely, obedience to His Will, since He is *the Lord our God,* and gratitude, since He brought us *out of the house of bondage* by freeing us from the yoke of Satan. 2. All other creatures worship God, as far as in them lies; the planets move regularly in their orbits, the seasons succeed one another in order, the trees and grasses grow, the flowers bloom, the birds sing, etc., all proclaiming the glory of their Creator and inviting man to His praise. How much more, then, should man worship God! 3. By worshipping God we associate ourselves with the saints and angels in heaven whose unceasing occupation is to adore the Divine Majesty.

Conclusion. 1. We should worship God in particular on Sundays and Holydays, since these are times especially set apart by His Church for that purpose. The means of doing this

are hearing Mass, attending vespers, benediction, saying special prayers, etc. 2. We should worship God every day, at least in the morning and in the evening, by raising our minds and hearts to Him in humble adoring prayer. 3. The chief defects to be avoided in our worship of God are: (a) voluntary distractions, and the performance of our religious duties in a purely routine manner; (b) irreverence, such as levity, unbecoming conduct and actions in church and at public devotions. Those who render mere external worship, or whose worship is characterized by irreverence draw down upon themselves God's curse rather than His blessing.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part III

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT

I am the Lord thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself a graven thing, etc.[1]

OPENING WORDS OF THE DECALOGUE

The pastor should use his best endeavors to induce the faithful to keep continually in view these words, "I am the Lord thy God." From them they will learn that their Lawgiver is none other than their Creator and Preserver, by whom they were made and are preserved, and that they may truly say with the Psalmist: "He is the Lord our God, and we are the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand."[2] The frequent and earnest inculcation of these words will also serve to induce the faithful more readily to observe the Law and avoid sin.

The words, "who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage," seem to relate solely to the Jews liberated from the bondage of Egypt. But if we consider the meaning of the salvation of the entire human race, those words are still more applicable to Christians, who are liberated by God not from the bondage of Egypt, but from the slavery of

[1] Exod. xx. 2.
[2] Ps. xciv. 7.

sin and "the power of darkness, and are translated into the kingdom of his beloved Son." [3] Contemplating the greatness of this favor, the prophet Jeremias foretold: "Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when it shall be said no more: the Lord liveth that brought forth the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt; but: the Lord liveth that brought the children of Israel out of the land of the north and out of all the lands to which I cast them out; and I will bring you again into their land which I gave to their fathers. Behold, I send many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them," etc.[4] And, indeed, our most indulgent Father has gathered together through His beloved Son, His children that were dispersed,[5] that being made free from sin and made the servants of justice,[6] "we may serve before him in holiness and justice all our days." [7]

Against every temptation, therefore, the faithful should arm themselves with these words of the Apostle as with a shield: "Shall we who are dead to sin live any longer therein?" [8] We are no longer our own, we are His who died and rose again for us. He is the Lord our God who has purchased us for Himself at the price of His blood. Shall we then be any longer capable of sinning against the Lord our God, and crucifying Him again? Being made truly free, and with that liberty wherewith Christ has made us free,[9] let us, as we heretofore yielded our members to serve injustice, henceforward yield them to serve justice to sanctification.[10]

THOU SHALT NOT HAVE STRANGE GODS BEFORE ME [11]

The pastor will teach that the first part of the Decalogue contains our duties towards God, the second part our duties towards our neighbor. The reason for this order is that the

[3] Col. i. 13.
[4] Jerem. xvi. 14, et. seq.
[5] John xi. 52.
[6] Rom. vi. 18.
[7] Luke i. 74, 75.
[8] Rom. vi. 2.
[9] Gal. iv. 31.
[10] Rom. vi. 19.
[11] Exod. xx. 3.

services we render our neighbor are rendered for the sake of God; for then only we love our neighbor as God commands when we love him for God's sake. The Commandments which regard God are those which were inscribed on the first table of the law.

THIS PRECEPT COMMANDS AND PROHIBITS

The pastor will next show that the words of the First Commandment just quoted contain a two-fold precept, the one mandatory, the other prohibitory. When it is said: "Thou shalt not have strange gods before me," it is equivalent to saying: "Thou shalt worship me the true God; thou shalt not worship strange gods."

WHAT THIS PRECEPT COMMANDS

The first part of this Commandment contains a precept of faith, hope, and charity. For, acknowledging God to be immovable, immutable, always the same, we confess that He is faithful and just. Hence in assenting to His oracles, we necessarily yield to Him all *faith* and authority. Again, who can contemplate His omnipotence, His clemency, His beneficence, and not repose in Him all his *hopes?* Finally, who can behold the riches of His goodness and love, which He lavishes on us with so bounteous a hand, and not *love* Him? Hence the exordium and the conclusion used by God in Scripture when giving His commands: "I, the Lord."

Sermons

Worship

BY THE REV. JOHN W. SULLIVAN

I beseech you, by the mercy of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, your rational worship.—Rom. xii. 1.

DUTY OF WORSHIP

St. Paul announces in this verse a series of practical exhortations on various subjects. He had clearly and forcibly

presented what God had done for His people, and now he undertakes to set forth what answerably they ought to do for their God. He does not merely present a line of action as proper to be followed, but he beseeches them, on the sure foundation of the mercy of God, to follow it, beseeches them by the noblest motive which can actuate the human heart—gratitude for undeserved favor. They are to present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God, their rational worship—not the body in distinction from or excluding the soul, but the entire man, including body and soul, including all the faculties of both—whatever gives to that which they do its right to be styled a rational worship. His inspired words apply to us as well as to the Romans—we, as they, must render unto God our worship.

The duty of worshipping God by thanking Him for His numberless blessings, both spiritual and temporal, by confessing His absolute sovereignty and our entire dependence, by praising Him for His own perfect fullness of being and marvelous works, is an obligation so well known to us that we need not dwell upon it. It is as reasonable a duty for us to worship God as the sowing of seed is for the husbandman, or as buying and selling is for the merchant.

The questions, however, arise as to how and when and where we are to perform this duty. And doubtless it will be of great benefit to us to spend a few moments of meditation on these questions this morning.

MEANING OF WORSHIP

The "reasonable worship" of which St. Paul speaks means *giving* something to God. It means, in his words, "presenting our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God." If in this life we be not recreant to our Christian vocation our occupation for eternity will be the worship of God. Like the seraphim whom Isaias beheld in the Temple, we shall sing day and night: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts;" like the ancients whom St. John saw in vision, we shall fall down in adoration before the Lamb of God, who sitteth upon the throne.

Heaven is a place of sublime and endless worship. There God is adored without ceasing by all the angels and saints who form His court. What, then, would those do in such company, who ever grudged God a few moments of prayer and worship? What pleasure could there be in the choirs of angels for those whose hearts are alienated from Him and who have no relish for His service? What better preparation can we make, then, to fit ourselves for the work of heaven than by learning to engage in and to love its work on earth?

How We Worship God

Present your bodies, your whole self, flesh and blood, senses, passions, ambitions, present all as a "living sacrifice." Each of us is to be a priest making the thank-offering—the incense of a pure and holy life. The law of both Jew and Gentile commanded that the victim led to the altar should be alive; and St. Paul requires that this be the case in the spiritual offering of our body to God. The idea of sacrifice is not its cost; it is the GIVING of something, the making it *sacred*. The sacrifice of the body, then, is to devote it to *sacred purposes*. "Yield your members to serve justice unto sanctification."

Your body, your soul stained with original sin was brought to the house of God, that it might be cleansed by the regenerating waters of Baptism and made acceptable to God. On that day you promised fealty to God, you renounced Satan with all his works and pomps, you offered then a living sacrifice, the victim you led to God's altar was alive. You then yielded "your members to serve justice unto sanctification."

But is it always a living sacrifice that we offer to God on our deathbed? Is it a living sacrifice that we bring to Him when the season of agony and alarm is upon us, when our days are few and our strength is gone, when our body, no longer able for the struggles of life and unfit for the purposes of men, will presently be laid in the dust whence it sprung? Is it a living sacrifice that is offered to God when we bring to Him bodies that have lost the appetite for worldly pleasures and have exhausted the power of gratifying themselves?

Therefore it is that, in the freshness and freedom of youth, when yet unfettered by care and uncorrupted by sin, yea, even in the season of manhood, before the evening twilight is settling upon your faculties, we should yield our bodies to sacred purposes, and offer them a living sacrifice to God.

Again, according to the law, the victim must be spotless and holy, and so likewise must our bodies be. In St. Paul's words, "Religion clean and undefiled before God is this: to visit the fatherless and widows in their tribulation, and to keep oneself unspotted from this world." While Christ alone is spotless, while He alone is without offence, He still demands that we be perfect as the heavenly Father is perfect, that we follow Him, and relying on Him as the source of our strength rest assured that our efforts to imitate Him will find acceptance in His sight. St. John Chrysostom explains what is meant by a holy sacrifice when he says: "Let the eye look upon no evil thing and *it* hath become a sacrifice; let thy tongue speak nothing filthy and *it* hath become an offering; let thy hand do no lawless deed and *it* hath become a whole burnt offering. Or, rather, this is not enough, but we must have good works also. Let the hands give alms; let the mouth bless them that cross us, and the hearing find leisure for the readings of the Scriptures. For sacrifice allows of no unclean thing." Whatever toil, whatever self-denial it costs us, we must somehow obtain Christ's grace—the grace of purity—else there is no hope of our finding Him a merciful high priest, to offer us at last to the heavenly Father.

And, finally, the sacrifice must be pleasing to God. What a great thought is this, that creatures such as we are can kindle pleasure in the heart of the Almighty. To do so we must follow the laws which He has set down. And, in the first place, our heart must be in the offering. Lip-service is no service if unaccompanied with hearty self-devotion, just as fasting for strife, as Isaias tells us, is not fasting to God. "But blessed is the man whose will is in the law of the Lord, he shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters, which shall bring forth its fruit in due season."

Furthermore, the Epistle to the Hebrews tells us, that "with-

out faith it is impossible to please God. For he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and is the rewarder of them that seek Him." Let us then offer our bodies in a spirit of faith, relying on Him who is the principle of our actions and the rewarder and punisher of them. We know, from the Old Testament, that however costly the sacrifices that were offered, thousands of rams or many thousands of goats, they were rejected if they were not offered in a spirit of faith and of love. "They shall offer victims, they shall sacrifice flesh and shall eat it, and the Lord will not receive them." If this holds under the Old Law, how much more does it bind under the Christian dispensation?

Let us offer our bodies in a spirit of charity, animated by the deep love of God. That love is the keeping of His law, "forgetting not to do good and to impart; for by such sacrifices God's favor is obtained." St. Paul calls the charitable offerings of the Philippians "an odor of sweetness, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God."

Offer them in a spirit of reverence. "Keep thy foot, when thou goest into the house of God, and draw nigh to hear. For much better is obedience than the victim of fools, who know not what they do." Our churches represent Calvary—with what sentiments, then, of humility, reverence and contrition should we enter them? Christ drove from the Temple those who profaned His Father's house, and thus He taught that there is a reverence due to the sacred place wherein God manifests His presence. He will not be mocked by mere external forms, He will not accept the service of pride or levity.

Thus is our worship made reasonable; reasonable because given to Him who has a right to demand it, to Him who has been graciously good to us; reasonable because it is of advantage to us for time and for eternity, giving us peace of conscience here and endless bliss hereafter. There is a cost, but that were a heartless piety which would bargain with God and serve Him cheaply. The cost is "your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing to God." Do we hesitate to make it? The suffering entailed by the sacrifice here will be more than compensated in the world of glory to come if we remain faithful

to the end. He who has promised to accept our offering will help us to perform it, for "our sufficiency is from God."

WHEN WE SHOULD WORSHIP GOD

In the fulness of health, in the days of prosperity, when all goes well, we must perform this our duty to God. In the dark gloomy days of adversity, when thick, lowering clouds close in around us, the duty still stands. And though the majesty and holiness of the place where God is worshipped has efficacy and power to stir up our devotion and give sensible aid to us in lifting up our hearts, yet God's presence is everywhere. "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy face? If I ascend into heaven, thou art there; if I descend into hell, thou art there. If I take wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." Wherever we may be, then, we can fulfill this our duty. Moses worshipped Him in the midst of the sea; Job worshipped Him on the dunghill; Daniel in the lions' den; Jacob at Bethel, and the three children in the furnace; the thief on the cross; St. Peter and St. Paul in prison; St. Lawrence on the gridiron called upon the Lord and He heard him. So wherever we may be, whatever our condition, the offering of our "bodies a living sacrifice, wholly pleasing to God," may be made by us.

There are various duties incumbent on us which, by the laws of God, we are required to perform, and thus we are not expected to spend our whole time in the worship of God. His being a reasonable or rational service it does not exclude the performance of the duties entailed by our state of life. There is little danger, however, of our going so far in our devotion to God that we shall neglect our health, our amusements, our family and domestic duties. There is far more need to urge ourselves on to greater fidelity in this regard, than to warn us against excess. But as under the Old Law there were special places and special times set aside for the performance of this duty, so under the New Law the time and the place

was appointed for the fulfilling of the obligation. God dwelt among His people in the Ark of the Covenant, and later in the Holy of Holies, where sacrifice was offered morning and evening of each day, while on the Sabbath the services were doubled. Morning and evening, then, at the very least, should our prayers ascend to Him as the sweet incense of our worship, though King David, amid the duties of his kingdom, sent up his words of praise seven times a day. Is our first act on awaking in the morning one of thanks giving to God for having preserved us during the night? Do we dare to trust ourselves to sleep—"death's counterfeit"—without prostrating ourselves at the feet of God and, acknowledging His power, ask His protection? Is our morning offering one of the lips merely, while our thoughts are set on the occupations of the day? Is our evening offering made while the heaviness of sleep is upon us? How many of us come here for an hour, or half an hour on Sunday mornings only, and think that the manna gathered then will suffice for the week? The thoughts of some of us from week's end to week's end are pretty much what they would be if there were no God at all. Yet St. Bonaventure tells us that if we could rid ourselves of vain and busy thoughts, and enrich our souls with good and holy reflections, with fervent and devout desires, we must be men of prayer. And men of prayer we can not be unless we are faithful to the least demand made upon us, that we worship our God morning and evening.

We have our churches, "where all may come together in one place and all things may be done decently and according to order." But such is the perversion of our heart, such our attachment to worldly affairs, that if left to ourselves to determine the proper times for the worship of God and the care of our souls we would be apt to neglect them entirely. God Himself, therefore, has fixed the time by setting aside the Sabbath day, and He has solemnly enjoined us to keep it. We are commanded, under pain of mortal sin, to hear Mass on Sunday, yet it is a sad fact, that to stay away from church is considered by many professing Catholics to be hardly worth a moment's thought. Yea, it is even considered an earmark

of liberality and a sign of culture to despise those formalities of religion on which our fathers set such store. How can he who will not pay his tribute of holy homage to God, who will not seek for support and consolation and mercy in his struggles with temptations, who will not seek for guidance in his difficulties, and for light and instruction in his darkness, and in his doubts—how can he, indeed, find grace, and peace, and aid, in seasonable time? God could well get along without the little homage He demands of us, but we can not get along toward our salvation if we keep out of touch with the means of grace vouchsafed us by the Sunday devotions and holy Mass. We are all sinful and none of us are well; hence we must come to the divine physician for our healing.

CONCLUSION

Think not, however, that your duty is ended when you have come to church. You have not offered "a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God, your rational worship," merely because you have spent an hour or two in God's holy house. He who searcheth the heart may know that you have not had one solemn impression of the divine Presence in your minds. He can tell whether it be your lips or your hearts that are near Him, whether you have come to Him in faith, reverence, and humility. Learn to know God—the great importance of religious knowledge can not be exaggerated. It will give you a fervency of spirit that will check your wandering thoughts, it will enliven your affections and set them on the object of your worship, it will make you value the importance of the sacrifice required of you. Your worship here, Sunday after Sunday, will be like that of the Athenians, the worship of an "unknown God," unless you come to the knowledge of who and what God is, and thus draw near to Him with your thoughts and hearts. Let your attention be fixed and your spirit fervent. There is no sacrifice like that of the obedient will, no sacrifice so pleasing to God as the soul that reflects His image.

Come to Him in your youth, like the child Samuel; come to

Him even in old age, and be faithful like the holy Simeon and the prophetess Anna. Wait not until the last hour, on the awful altar of the deathbed, in the weakness and exhaustion of gratified vice; wait not till then to turn priest and vainly offer your bodies a "living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God."

Be faithful in paying your worship to God morning and evening, and fail not to fulfill the obligation of hearing Mass with reverence, attention, and humility on Sundays. Make a full and generous sacrifice. Heaven, as it has been said, is a place of sublime worship. Prepare for it here. He who has no taste for Christ now can scarcely hope to delight in His company hereafter. He who will give nothing in this life can expect nothing in the life to come.

The Duty of Thankfulness to God: Our Creation

BY THE REV. J. A. MCMULLAN, C.SS.R.

Think of the Lord in goodness.—Wisd. i. 1.

DUTY OF THANKFULNESS

To begin at the very beginning, as a Catholic, you admit that God has made you, and placed you in this beautiful world of His, to know Him, love Him, and serve Him here, that you might be happy with Him for all eternity hereafter. Now, I want you to try to understand the goodness of God in all this —to think of that goodness, and to acknowledge that, in return for it, you should spend your life in the service of your Maker.

For though it may sound rude to you to say it, yet it is profitable to remember that God had really no need of you. He could undoubtedly have managed somehow without you. I happened to be alive before you came and honestly we were not talking about you—there was no great looking forward, as far as I know, to your arrival. And when you did come, there was no very great stir made. Things went on outside your family circle pretty well as usual. What has happened since, you know yourself better perhaps than most of us! But

it will all be over soon—quite astonishingly soon! And then we shall all disappear—first I—then you, for, as I came first, I want to be fair—and the smallness of the holes which our graves shall make on the crust of the great earth's surface will probably be a fair indication of the impression we shall have made on the memory and imagination of man.

But now, cheer up. We must not grow melancholy over it. After all, that's not *"the rub"*—not what will take place here—but what will take place *"There."* But at present even *that* is not my point. But THIS—our *insignificance.* Like little Mr. Toots, we really are of "no consequence whatever." How great soever the work you may have done may be—and I don't wish to belittle it—God could have done without it, or could have got someone else to do it. It was not necessary for Him or for His world. For His own sake He demands one work of you, the saving of your soul. If in doing that, by His grace, you help the cause of the Church, or the good of your neighbor, that is but as the means to the end: the end (no matter how exalted or important be the means) must ever be for yourself—for your good—the salvation of your soul by keeping God's commandments. And were you to gain the whole world—materially, socially or even spiritually and failed to save your soul, you would have come short of the end for which you were created—and in God's eyes your life would have been a failure. "What doth it profit a man"—says Christ—"if he gain the whole world and suffer the loss of his own soul?"

He has made you, then, for your own good—and marvelously and wonderfully has He made you. Your body was born in the order of nature by generation, but your soul was a special individual act of the great creative power of God. Not as He made the beasts of the field, or the fishes of the sea, or the birds of the air, has He made man—calling them into being by one almighty "fiat" and bidding them increase and multiply according to their kind. No, but each soul of man was a separate work. First one, then another was created, each by itself—with its own powers, its own strength and its own individual purpose. Thus has He thought of you, thus has He meant, thus has He purposed and intended you. "Lord, I am fearfully and wonderfully

made." Nor did he create you only, and then leave your soul to sustain itself. No! Only the power of God could sustain it. And from the instant of its creation, and for as long as God is God, His hand must hold it, or it would cease to be. This is the meaning of the inspired word: "He hath made me and HATH PLACED HIS HAND UPON ME." Nearer, then, than mother to her child has the great God been, and must ever be to you. "There is no nation that hath its God so nigh unto it as is our true God nigh unto us."

Think well of this, then, and it will come to you that, though God, being God, must make all things for His own greater glory, yet the act by which He made you and bound Himself to you for evermore, has been an act of special and individual love *for you.*

But He has not left the discovery of this pregnant truth to our own inference. He has told it to us Himself: "With an evarlasting love have I loved thee; therefore have I drawn thee, taking pity on thee." There does He deign to reveal to us, so that we can be as sure of it as we are of our existence itself, that He made us—drew us out of our nothingness—because He loves us. And as we can never cease to be the creatures of God, so we can ever reckon—no matter what befall us, that there is ever that love of our Creator to appeal to. The Church knows this well, and every day in her office she exhorts us all—saints and sinners alike, to plead for the mercy of the God who made us. "Let us weep before the Lord *that made us,*" does she cry to us, in the words of the Psalmist—"for He is the Lord our God, and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture." And it is with the same thought that she will stand over us at the end, and recommend our dying soul to God—"Remember he is Thy creature, not made by strange gods, but by Thee, the only true and living God." Please God, she will be able to say more than that about us, but if the worst comes to the worst, that she always can say at least; and that is a tender plea for mercy.

But now I don't want to be responsible for any undue presumption here. Creation is indeed a plea for mercy, but will it avail for those who, though they had the faith to acknowl-

edge their Maker—though by their Baptism they had become children of God, yet in their lives they rejected and denied Him? May they not rather fear the reproach of Moses to the Israelites. "They have sinned against Him, and are none of His people. Is this the return Thou makest to the Lord, O foolish and senseless people? Is not He thy Father that hath possessed thee, and made thee, and created thee?" (Deut. xxxii. 5). Thus should the thought of our Creator keep us from sin, that when we die and go to Him, He may own us for His creatures, not by the necessity of our nature merely, but for His children by our free choice and loving obedience. "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth before the time of affliction come—before the silver cord be broken, and the golden fillet shrink back, and the pitcher be crushed at the fountain, and the wheel be broken upon the cistern—and the dust return into its earth from whence it was *and the spirit return to the God* WHO GAVE IT" (Eccl. xii. 1-6, 7).

If we could thus establish the kingdom of God within us, owning Him from our youth as our Creator, and in gratitude living a life of obedience to Him; then would it be easy for us to see the hand of our bountiful Father in the good things of earth with which He has surrounded us—"to think of Him in goodness"—and to thank Him for them—for He made them for us in the beginning, and blessed them for our use and placed them at our service. The clean of heart see God in all his works and rejoice exceedingly in praising Him for His glory.

"O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is Thy name in the whole earth—for I will behold Thy heavens, the works of Thy fingers; the moon and the stars which Thou hast founded. What is man that Thou art mindful of him, or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him little less than the angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor, and hast set him over the works of Thy hands." Thus in the eighth psalm and in many another does the Royal prophet—the man after God's own heart—pour out his exulting soul in praise and thanks to God for His loving favors. Thus, too, has it ever been with the saints of God—Heaven and earth and all

things tell me that I should love Thee—cries the great St. Augustine.

St. Mary Magdalene of Pazzi, holding in her hand some little flower she had plucked from the garden, would exclaim in an ecstasy of gratitude—So then, my God, Thou hast thought of me and from all eternity hast willed this little flower to give me pleasure. And was it not a little flower her father "took from the crannies, root and all," for her that made Soeur Thérèse see her vocation and taught her the special piety God had designed her to preach and to practice (Histoire, p. 83). The clean of heart, then, see God and learn from the works of His hands "to think of Him in goodness" and in gratitude. And we, I say, who are joined with them in one faith and one Baptism should glory to honor with them the one great Lord and praise Him in all His works.

HOW THE DUTY OF THANKFULNESS IS IGNORED

Never perhaps has this debt of gratitude which we owe our great Creator been, in Christian times, so completely ignored as it is to-day. At all times, indeed, men have failed in this duty. "He was in the world"—says St. John—"and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not." And more emphatically does St. Paul speak of it to the Romans (i. 19): "That which is known to God is manifest in them. For God hath manifested it unto them. For the visible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made: His eternal power also and Divinity; so that they are inexcusable because (that) when they knew God they have not glorified Him as God or given thanks." So that at all times man has failed in this essential duty. But nowadays this ingratitude shows itself with a special malice—for now it is men who know most about the works of God who are most forward in robbing Him of His praise. Scientists who, with telescope or with microscope, probe with unconquerable patience, with unerring accuracy, with infinite elaboration of detail, every secret of nature, seem morbidly jealous lest the God who created these wonders and,

indeed, enabled them to discover them, should from their labors derive any fresh claim to the praise and thanks of His people.

It is not for us to say that God has manifested Himself to them, as St. Paul said he did in the beginning, and that therefore they are *"inexcusable."* Let us be no man's judge in this matter. But, on the other hand, we are not to suppose their unbelief *inevitable*—as being the necessary consequence of their superior knowledge. In all ages, Catholics of solid piety and exemplary lives have ever been found in the ranks of the ablest scientists and so have given that supremely priggish notion the lie direct. But we may surely protest against these scientists becoming apostles of unbelief. It is bad enough that they should say in their own hearts, "There is no God"—without trying to lure simple Catholics to the drab and dreary level of their foolishness. We can understand and indeed perhaps pardon a certain amount of irritation with the conservative slowness of the Church. Though if the most radical and advanced government of modern times can use for a motto—"Wait and see"—surely the lasting and venerable Church of God can be allowed her own time in welcoming some "latest" discovery of science which her age-long experience of such things might well warn her the next generation would probably regard as a "mare's nest."

CONCLUSION

We have seen that in creating us God has made us so dependent on Him that His hand must ever hold us or we should cease to be. Consequently that Creation has brought Him nearer to us than ever mother was to her child. That God had no need of us and all that He has done in thus creating us, and continues to do in preserving us, is an evidence of His pure love for us. That such love should excite our gratitude and make us, at least in return, "think of Him in goodness." Such a disposition will enable us to be quick to see the benefits of God in the wonders of creation with which He has surrounded us. And a special call is made on this gratitude to-day, as it is a duty almost universally ignored. Men of science are

perhaps the worst offenders. For nowadays many of them are not only unbelievers but even protagonists of unbelief, and it is to the young men of the rising generation they make their special appeal. Let us resolve by every means in our power, then, to repel this insidious attack that these men have designed to make upon our faith. It is the cause of our Creator we are defending. Let us look with full confidence to Him for our support.

"Thine is the day and Thine is the night: Thou hast made the morning light and the sun. Thou hast made all the borders of the earth: the summer and the spring were formed by Thee. Remember this: the enemy hath approached the Lord and a foolish people hath provoked Thy name. Let not the humble be turned away. The poor and needy shall praise Thy name. Arise, O God, and judge Thy own cause."—Ps. 73.

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LAST SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUBJECT

DELIVER US FROM EVIL. AMEN

TEXT

We cease not to pray for you, . . . that you may walk worthily of God, in all things pleasing.—COL. i. 9, 10.

Pray that your flight be not in the winter, or on the sabbath: for there shall be then great tribulation, such as hath not been from the beginning of the world until now, neither shall be.—MATT. xxiv. 20, 21.

Analysis

INTRODUCTION. Both the Epistle and Gospel of to-day show us the great need of this Seventh Petition of the Our Father in which we pray to be delivered from evil. St. Paul, having heard while in prison at Rome, that the faithful of Colossae were in danger of being led into error by certain false teachers, wrote them that his prayer for them was unceasing that they should be delivered from that evil. And our Lord in the Gospel, foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem, admonishes the disciples to pray for deliverance from certain special evils that should otherwise attend their flight from the doomed city.

I. **Necessity of this Petition.** The life of man on earth is beset with many evils: 1. There are *public* evils, such as the calamities of war, pestilence and famine, earthquakes, storms, conflagrations. 2. There are *domestic* evils, such as dissensions, quarrelings, want of affection, unfaithfulness, separations, divorces, and the like (Luke xii. 52, 53). 3. There are *personal* evils, such as, loss of property, disappointments, poverty, sickness, persecution, death, and so on. 4. Besides physical there are *moral* evils, such as adulteries, scandals, murders, heresies, blasphemies, and the like. How rightly, therefore, is it said that the life of man on earth is a warfare and his days full of misery (Job xiv. 1, 2; Eccles. ii. 23). 5. Man's only refuge amid

the evils of life is God, and hence our Lord in this last Petition of the Our Father bids us have recourse for help to the Father in heaven.

II. **The meaning of this Petition.** 1. The term "deliver" here means that God should, (a) keep evils from us, or extricate us from evils into which we have fallen; (b) prevent evils from leading us to eternal ruin. 2. We say "deliver *us*," which means, first of all, ourselves; then, our relatives, friends, benefactors, etc.; and finally, all who are in trouble, sorrow, etc. 3. We say *"deliver us from evil,"* meaning that God should free us from all those public, domestic, and personal evils that can in any way imperil our spiritual welfare. In this Petition we do not pray that God should give us heaven here, that is, that He should take away from us all those crosses and trials which are useful to our spiritual perfection and greater glory hereafter. The chief thing we ask is to be delivered from moral evils, that is, sin and its consequences, and those temporal afflictions which might prove an occasion of sin.

Conclusion. 1. In seeking deliverance from evil we should rely principally on God, not delaying to have recourse to Him till all human means are exhausted. 2. In praying for deliverance from evil we should not lose sight of the glory of God and resignation to His will. 3. The word, "amen," at the end of the Lord's Prayer means that God has heard us, provided we have prayed properly, and hence should fill us with confidence and joy.

Catechism of the Council of Trent, Part IV

The Seventh Petition of the Lord's Prayer

but deliver us from evil

the importance of this petition

This Petition with which the Son of God concludes this prayer embodies the substance of all the other Petitions. To show its force and importance, our Lord made use of this

Petition when He prayed on the eve of His Passion for the salvation of mankind. "I pray," He said, "that thou keep them from evil." [1] In this Petition, then, which our Lord not only commanded us to use, but made use of Himself, He has epitomized, as it were, the meaning and spirit of all the other Petitions. For if we obtain what this Petition asks, that is, the protection of God against evil, which enables us to stand secure and safe against the machinations of the world and the devil, then, as St. Cyprian remarks, nothing more remains to be asked.[2]

Such, then, being the nature of this Petition, the diligence of the pastor in its exposition should be commensurate to its importance. The difference between it and the preceding Petition consists in this, that in the one we beg to avoid sin, in the other, to escape punishment.

NECESSITY OF THIS PETITION

It cannot be necessary to remind the faithful of the numerous evils and calamities to which we are exposed, and how much we stand in need of the divine assistance. The many and serious miseries of human life have been often described by sacred and profane writers, and there is hardly anyone who has not observed them either in his own life or in that of others. We are all convinced of the truth of these words of holy Job, that model of patience: "Man, born of woman, and living for a short time, is filled with many miseries. He cometh forth like a flower, and is destroyed, and fleeth as a shadow, and never continueth in the same state." [3] That no day passes without its own trouble or annoyance is proved by these words of our Lord: "Sufficient for the day is the evil thereof." [4] Indeed, the condition of human life is pointed out by our Lord Himself, when He admonishes us that we are to take up our cross daily and follow Him.[5]

[1] John xvii. 15.
[2] Lib. de Orat.
[3] Job. xiv. 1.
[4] Matt. vi. 34.
[5] Luke ix. 23.

Since, therefore, every one must realize the trials and dangers inseparable from human life, it will not be difficult to convince the faithful that they ought to implore of God deliverance from evil, since no motive exercises a more powerful influence over men than a desire and hope of deliverance from those evils, which oppress or threaten them. There is in the heart of everyone a natural inclination to have instant recourse to God in the face of danger, as it is written, "Fill their faces with shame, and they shall seek thy name, O Lord." [6]

HOW THIS PETITION SHOULD BE MADE

If, then, in calamities and dangers the unbidden impulse of nature prompts men to call on God, it surely becomes the duty of those to whose fidelity and prudence their salvation is intrusted to instruct them carefully in the proper performance of this duty.

WE SHOULD SEEK FIRST THE GLORY OF GOD

For there are some who, contrary to the command of Christ, reverse the order of this prayer. He, who commands us to have recourse to Him in the day of tribulation,[7] has also prescribed to us the order in which we should seek the divine favors. It is His will that, before we pray to be delivered from evil, we pray that the name of God be sanctified, that His kingdom come, and so on through the other Petitions of the Lord's Prayer, which are, as it were, so many steps by which we reach this last Petition. Yet there are those who, if their head, their side, or their foot, ache; if they suffer loss of property; if menaces or dangers from an enemy alarm them; if famine, war, or pestilence afflict them, omit all the other Petitions of the Lord's Prayer and ask only to be delivered from these evils. This practice is at variance with the express command of Christ: "Seek first the kingdom of God." [8]

[6] Ps. lxxxii. 17.
[7] Ps. xlix. 15.
[8] Matt. vi. 33.

To pray, therefore, as we ought, we should have in view the greater glory of God, even when we ask deliverance from calamities, trials and dangers. Thus, when David offered this prayer: "Lord rebuke me not in thine anger," he subjoined the reason, "For there is no one in death, that is mindful of thee, and who shall confess to thee in hell."[9] And again, having implored God to have mercy on him, he added: "I will teach the unjust thy ways; and the wicked shall be converted to thee."[10]

OUR CHIEF CONFIDENCE SHOULD BE IN GOD

The faithful should be encouraged to use this salutary manner of praying and to imitate the example of the prophet. And at the same time their attention should be called to the marked difference that exists between the prayers of the infidel and those of the Christian. The infidel, too, begs of God to cure his diseases, and to heal his wounds, to deliver him from approaching or impending evils; but he places his principal hope of deliverance in the remedies provided by nature, or prepared by man. He makes no scruple of using medicine no matter by whom prepared, no matter if accompanied by charms, spells, or other diabolical arts, provided he can promise himself some hope of recovery.

Not so the Christian. When visited by sickness, or other adversity, he flies to God as his supreme refuge and defence. Acknowledging and revering God alone as the author of all his good and his deliverer from evil, he ascribes to Him whatever healing virtue resides in medicines, convinced that they are efficacious only in so far as it is the divine will that they should be so. For it is God who has given medicines to man to heal his corporal infirmities; and hence these words of Ecclesiasticus: "The Most High hath created medicines out of the earth, and a wise man will not abhor them."[11] He, therefore, who has pledged his fidelity to Jesus Christ, does not place his principal hope of recovery in such remedies; he places it in God, the author of these medicines.

[9] Ps. vi. 6.
[10] Ps. l. 15.
[11] Eccl. xxxviii. 1.

Hence the Sacred Scriptures condemn the conduct of those who, confiding in the power of medicine, seek no assistance from God.[12] Nay more, those, who regulate their lives by the laws of God, abstain from the use of all medicines which are not evidently intended by Almighty God to be medicinal; and, were there even a certain hope of recovery by using any other, they abstain from them as so many charms and diabolical artifices.

The faithful, then, are to be exhorted to place their confidence in God. Our most bountiful Father has commanded us to beg of Him our deliverance from evil, in order that His command should inspire us with the hope of obtaining the object of our prayers. Of this truth the Sacred Scriptures afford many illustrations, so that they whom reason does not inspire with confidence may be compelled to confidence by a multitude of examples. Abraham, Jacob, Lot, Joseph, and David are unexceptional witnesses of the divine goodness; and the instances recorded in the New Testament of persons rescued from the greatest dangers, by the efficacy of devout prayer, are so numerous as to make it unnecessary to mention special cases. On this subject, therefore, we shall content ourselves with one text from the prophet, which is sufficient to confirm even the weakest: "The just cried, and the Lord heard them; and delivered them out of all their troubles." [13]

THIS PETITION DOES NOT ASK DELIVERANCE FROM ALL EVILS

We now come to explain the meaning and nature of the Petition. Let the faithful understand that in it we by no means ask deliverance from every evil. There are some things which are commonly considered evils, and which, notwithstanding, are of advantage to those who endure them. Such was the sting of the flesh to which the Apostle was subjected in order that, by the aid of divine grace, power might be perfected in infirmity.[14] When the pious Christian learns the salutary influence of such things, far from praying for their removal, he rejoices in them

[12] Paral. xvi. 12.
[13] Ps. xxxiii. 18.
[14] 2 Cor. xii. 17.

exceedingly. We pray, therefore, against those evils only, which do not conduce to our spiritual interests; not against such as are profitable to our salvation.

THE EVILS AGAINST WHICH WE PRAY

The full meaning of this Petition, therefore, is, that having been freed from sin and from the danger of temptation, we may be delivered from internal and external evils; that we may be protected from floods, fire, and lightning; that the fruits of the earth be not destroyed by hail; that we be not visited by famine, sedition, or war. We ask that God may banish disease, pestilence, and disaster from us; that He may keep us from slavery, imprisonment, exile, betrayals, treachery, and from all other evils which fill mankind with terror and misery. Finally, we pray that God would remove all occasions of sin and iniquity.

We do not, however, pray to be delivered only from those things which all look upon as evils, but also from those things which almost all consider to be good, such as riches, honors, health, strength, and even life itself; that is, we ask that these things be not detrimental or ruinous to our soul's welfare.

We also beg of God that we be not cut off by a sudden death; that we provoke not His anger against us; that we be not condemned to suffer the punishments reserved for the wicked; that we be not sentenced to endure the fire of purgatory, from which we piously and devoutly implore that others may be liberated.

This is the explanation of this Petition given by the Church in the Mass and Litanies, where we pray to be delivered from evil past, present, and to come.

GOD DELIVERS US FROM EVIL IN A VARIETY OF WAYS

The goodness of God delivers us from evil in a variety of ways. He prevents impending evils, as we read with regard to the Patriarch Jacob, whom He delivered from the enemies that were stirred up against him on account of the slaughter of the Sichimites. For we read: "The terror of God fell upon all the cities round about, and they durst not pursue after them as they went away." [15]

[15] Gen. xxxv. 5.

The blessed who reign with Christ the Lord in heaven have been delivered by the divine assistance from all evil; but, as for us, although the Almighty delivers us from some evils, it is not His will that, while journeying in this our mortal pilgrimage, we should be entirely exempt from all.

The consolations with which God sometimes refreshes those who labor under adversity are, however, equivalent to an exemption from all evil; and with these the prophet consoled himself when he said: "According to the multitude of my sorrows in my heart, thy consolations have rejoiced my soul." [16] God, moreover, delivers men from evil when He preserves them unhurt in the midst of extreme danger, as He did in the case of the children thrown into the fiery furnace,[17] whom the fire did not burn, and of Daniel, whom the lions did not injure.[18]

THE DEVIL IS CALLED THE EVIL ONE

According to the interpretation of the great saints Basil, Chrysostom, and Augustine, the devil is specially called the evil one, because he was the author of man's transgression, that is, of his sin and iniquity, and also because God makes use of him as an instrument to chastise sinful and impious men. For the evils which mankind endure in punishment of sin are appointed by God; and this is the meaning of these words of Holy Writ: "Shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done?" [19] and: "I am the Lord and there is none else: I form the light and create darkness: I make peace and create evil." [20]

The devil is also called evil, because, although we have never done any thing to provoke his hostility, he wages perpetual war against us, and pursues us with mortal hatred. If we put on the armor of faith and the shield of innocence, he can have no power to hurt us; nevertheless he unceasingly tempts us by external evils and every other means of annoyance within

[16] Ps. lxiii. 19.
[17] Dan. vi. 22.
[18] Dan. iii. 50.
[19] Amos iii. 6.
[20] Isa. xlv. 7.

his reach. Wherefore we beseech God to deliver us from the evil one.

We say from evil, not from evils, because the evils which we experience from others we ascribe to the arch enemy as their author and instigator. Hence instead of cherishing resentment against our neighbor we should turn our hatred and anger against Satan himself, by whom men are instigated to harm us.

Hence if your neighbor has injured you in any respect, when you pray to God your Father, beg of Him not only to deliver you from evil, that is, from the injuries, which your neighbor inflicts; but also to rescue your neighbor from the power of the devil, whose wicked suggestions impel man to deeds of injustice.[21]

PATIENCE UNDER CONTINUED AFFLICTION

Finally, we must remember that if by prayers and supplications we are not delivered from evil, we should endure our afflictions with patience, convinced that it is the will of God that we should so endure them. If, therefore, God hear not our prayers, we are not to yield to feelings of peevishness or discontent; we must submit in all things to the divine will and pleasure, regarding as useful and salutary to us, that which happens in accordance with the will of God, not that which is agreeable to our own wishes.

Finally the pastor should admonish his pious hearers that during our mortal career we should be prepared to meet every kind of affliction and calamity, not only with patience, but even with joy. For it is written: "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution;"[22] and again: "Through many tribulations we must enter into the kingdom of heaven;"[23] and further: "Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and so enter into His glory."[24] A servant should not

[21] Chrysost., hom. 20. in Matt.; hom. 5 in Job; Aug., in Ecclesiast. dogm. cap. 57; Basil., in hom. quod Deus non sit auctor malorum, near the end.
[22] 2 Tim. iii. 12.
[23] Acts. xiv. 21.
[24] Luke xxiv. 26.

be greater than his master; and as St. Bernard says: "Delicate members do not become a head crowned with thorns." [25] The example of Urias challenges our admiration and imitation. When urged by David to remain at home, he replied: "The ark of God, and Israel, and Juda, dwell in tents; and shall I go into my house?" [26]

If to prayer we bring with us these reflections and these dispositions, although encompassed by evils on every side, we shall, like the three children who passed unhurt amidst the flames, be preserved uninjured; or at least, like the Machabees, we shall bear up against adverse fortune with firmness and fortitude.

In the midst of contumelies and tortures we should imitate the blessed examples of the Apostles, who, after they had been scourged, "rejoiced exceedingly that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus." [27] Filled with such sentiments, we shall sing in transports of joy: "Princes have persecuted me without cause; and my heart hath been in awe of thy words; I will rejoice at thy words, as one that hath found great spoil." [28]

The Seal of the Lord's Prayer

AMEN

NECESSITY OF EXPLAINING THE CONCLUSION OF THE LORD'S PRAYER

St. Jerome in his commentary on St. Matthew rightly calls the word *Amen* what it really is, "the seal of the Lord's prayer." [29] As then we have already admonished the faithful with regard to the preparation to be made before this holy prayer, so we deem it necessary that they should also know why we close our prayers with this word, and also what it signifies; for devotion in con-

[25] Serm. 5, de omnibus Sanctis.
[26] 2 Kings xi. 1.
[27] Acts. v. 4.
[28] Ps. cxviii. 161.
[29] In Matt. vi. 6.

cluding our prayers is not less important than attention in beginning them.

FRUITS OF THIS PRAYER

1. ASSURANCE THAT WE HAVE BEEN HEARD

The faithful, then, should be taught that the fruits which we gather from the conclusion of the Lord's prayer are numerous and abundant, the greatest and most joyful of them being the attainment of what we ask. On this point enough has already been said.

2. INCREASED FERVOR AFTER PRAYER

By this concluding word, not only do we obtain a propitious hearing from God, but also receive other blessings of a higher order still, the excellence of which surpasses all powers of description.

For since, as St. Cyprian remarks, prayer is converse with God, it happens in a wonderful manner that the divine Majesty is brought nearer to those who are engaged in prayer than to others, and enriches them with singular gifts. Those, therefore, who pray devoutly, may not be inaptly compared to persons who approach a glowing fire; if cold, they derive warmth; if warm, they derive heat, from its intensity. Thus, also, those who approach God in prayer depart with a warmth and ardor proportioned to their faith and fervor; the heart is inflamed with zeal for the glory of God, the mind is illumined after an admirable manner, and the soul is enriched exceedingly with a plenteous effusion of divine gifts, as it is written: "Thou hast prevented him with blessings of sweetness." [30]

Of these astonishing effects of prayer Moses affords an illustrious example; by intercourse and converse with God, Moses so shone with the reflected splendors of the Divinity, that the Israelites could not look upon his eyes or countenance.[31]

[30] Ps. xx. 4.
[31] Exod. xxxiv. 35.

3. CONFIDENCE AND JOY FROM PRAYER

Those who pray with such vehement fervor enjoy, in a wonderful manner, the goodness and majesty of God. "In the morning," says the prophet, "I will stand before thee and will see; because thou are not a God that willest iniquity." [32]

The more familiar these truths are to the mind, the more piously do we venerate, and the more fervently do we worship God, and the more delightfully do we taste "how sweet is the Lord, and how blessed is the man that hopeth in him." [33]

Encircled by the most clear light from above, we also discover our own lowliness, and how exalted is the majesty of God, according to the saying of St. Augustine: "Give me to know thee; give me to know myself." Distrusting our own strength, we thus throw ourselves unreservedly upon the goodness of God, not doubting that He, who cherishes us in the bosom of His paternal wondrous love, will afford us in abundance whatever is necessary to the support of life and the attainment of salvation. Thus we shall turn to God with the warmest gratitude our hearts can conceive and our lips express, following the example of holy David, who commenced by praying, "Save me from all them that persecute me," and concluded with these words, "I will give glory to the Lord according to his justice, and will sing to the name of the Lord the Most High." [34]

There are innumerable prayers of the saints which breathe the same spirit, beginning with sentiments of reverential fear, and ending with consolatory and joyous hope. This spirit, however, is eminently conspicuous in the Psalms of David. When agitated by fear he began his prayer thus: "Many are they who rise up against me: many say to my soul, there is no salvation for him in his God;" but at length, armed with fortitude and holy joy, he adds: "I will not fear thousands of the people surrounding me." [35] In another Psalm, after he

[32] Ps. v. 5.
[33] Ps. xxxiii. 9.
[34] Ps. vii. 3–18.
[35] Ps. iii. 3, 7.

had lamented his misery, we see him towards the end, reposing confidence in God and rejoicing exceedingly in the hope of salvation: "In peace in the self-same, I will sleep, and I will rest." [36] Again, with what fear and trembling must he not have been agitated when he exclaimed: "O Lord, rebuke me not in thy indignation, nor chastise me in thy wrath!" yet, on the other hand, what confidence and joy must not have been his when he added: "Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping!" [37] When filled with dread of the wrath and fury of soul, with what lowliness and humility does he not implore the divine assistance: "Save me, O Lord, by thy name, and judge me in thy strength!" [38] and yet, in the same psalm he adds these words of joy and confidence: "Behold, God is my help; and the Lord is the helper of my soul."

Let him, therefore, who has recourse to holy prayer approach God his Father, fortified by faith and animated by hope, not doubting that he will obtain those blessings of which he stands in need.

FIRST EXPLANATION OF THE WORD "AMEN"

The word *amen*, with which the Lord's prayer concludes, contains, as it were, the germs of many of these thoughts and reflections which we have just considered. Indeed, so frequent was this Hebrew word in the mouth of the Saviour, that it pleased the Holy Ghost to have it retained in the Church of God. Its meaning may be said to be: "Know that thy prayers are heard." It has the force of a response, as if God condescended to return an answer to the suppliant, and graciously took leave of him, after having favorably heard his prayers.

This interpretation has been approved by the constant usage of the Church of God. In the Sacrifice of the Mass, when the Lord's prayer is said she does not assign the word "amen," to the server, who answers, "but deliver us from evil." She reserves it as appropriate to the priest himself, who, as mediator between God

[36] Ps. iv. 9.
[37] Ps. vi. 2, 9.
[38] Ps. liii. 3.

and man, answers "amen," thus intimating that God has heard the prayers of His people.

This practice, however, is not common to all the prayers, but is peculiar to the Lord's prayer. To the other prayers the server answers "amen," because, in every other, this word only expresses assent and desire. In the Lord's prayer it is an answer, intimating that God has heard the petition of His suppliant.

OTHER EXPLANATIONS OF THE WORD "AMEN"

By many, the word "amen" is differently interpreted. The Septuagint interprets it, "so be it"; others translate it, "verily," or "truly"; Aquila renders it, "faithfully." Which of these versions we adopt, is a matter of little importance, provided we understand the word to have the sense already mentioned, namely, that when the priest pronounces "Amen," it signifies the concession of what has been prayed for. This interpretation is supported by St. Paul in his Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says: "All the promises of God are in him, it is;[39] therefore also by him, amen to God, unto our glory."

ADVANTAGES OF TERMINATING OUR PRAYER WITH THIS WORD

To us also this word is very appropriate, containing, as it does, some confirmation of the Petitions which we have already offered up to the throne of God. It also fixes our attention when we are engaged in holy prayer; for it not infrequently happens that in prayer a variety of distracting thoughts divert the mind to other objects.

Nay, more, by this word we most earnestly beg of God that all our preceding Petitions may be granted; or rather, understanding that they have been all granted, and feeling the divine assistance powerfully present with us, we cry out in the inspired words of the prophet: "Behold God is my helper; and the Lord is the protection of my soul."[40]

Nor can anyone doubt that God is moved by the name of His Son, and by a word so often uttered by the divine lips of

[39] 2 Cor. i. 20.
[40] Ps. liii. 6.

Him who, as the Apostle says, "was always heard for his reverence." [41]

Sermon

Deliver Us from Evil. Amen

BY THE REV. THOMAS M. SCHWERTNER, O.P., S.T.LR.

We cease not to pray for you that you may walk worthily of God in all things pleasing.—Col. i. 9, 10.

Pray that your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath; for there shall be then great tribulations such as hath not been from the beginning of the world till now, neither shall be.—Matt. xxiv. 20, 21.

INTRODUCTION

Even if it were not a divine book, inspired by the Holy Ghost and giving us under the divinest guarantees the authentic will of God in our regards, the Bible would still exercise a mighty influence over the human heart, for the very simple reason that every page discovers an intimate knowledge of man's heart and an unfailing courage in facing the problems that come up for solution in every human life. The Blessed Scriptures do not blink the age old fact in the face that life is a warfare, not a carnival; that life is beset with evils of all kinds, which make a man's days dreary and wearisome. For example, in the gospel of to-day, our Lord foretells the impending destruction of the Royal City of David, with its whole sad story of miseries for individuals as for the Jewish people. He bids His Apostles pray that they be delivered from certain evils which otherwise would attend their departure from the doomed city. And some decades of years later, even before the prophecy referred to by our Lord had been fulfilled, the great Apostle of the Gentiles, languishing under the heavy load of Roman captivity, wrote with anxiety and solicitude to the Christians of Colossae, who were in great danger of being led astray by false teachers. He tries to arouse them

[41] Heb. v. 7.

from their sleep by assuring them that, though groaning under the hardships that had overtaken Him, He is still praying that they be delivered from the evil that hovers over them. And so on every page of the Blessed Book our attention is called to that petition which our Lord Himself inserted in the prayer that He taught His Apostles at their own request. The Our Father, that prayer which is the divinest prayer known to man, which better than any other prayer gives God the proper honor and obtains for us the answer to our greatest, most urgent needs. In the twilight, as He stood overlooking the doomed city, our Lord bade His followers pray to the Heavenly Father to be delivered from evil.

Necessity of Praying for Deliverance from Evil

The mere fact that Divine Wisdom Itself, before whom the ages are as an open book, to whom the innermost secrets of the heart are as clear as daylight, saw fit to include this Petition in the prayer which He taught His own to make use of till the end of time, ought to satisfy us all as to the advisability of praying for the deliverance from evil. Prayer, to Christ, was not the random pastime of a leisure hour but the exercise of man's highest faculty to the highest purpose. It was conversation with Divine Wisdom, therefore requiring the best efforts of our heart and mind. And if we were to pray to God for the removal of the evils that beset us it was not only because to do this would be to our own advantage, but also because God, who is goodness itself, was interested in us and ever prepared to help us according to the inscrutable wisdom of His own divine plans.

But we may ask here: What are the evils from which we plead to be delivered? There are, first of all, public evils, which come upon men as members of a nation or people—evils such as war, when the young and strong go forth from home with the heavy task upon them to spill others' blood, and often their own, in defence of justice and the rightful honor and freedom of their country; evils such as famine, when the earth refuses to give forth the fruits which keep men alive; pestilence, when old and young die down like grass that is to be burned; earth-

quakes, when the hidden powers of nature toy with the vaunted strength of men and shave down the proud towers of his security; storms, when the fury of the elements in rain, wind, hail, and lightning, crush the dwellings of men like egg-shells; conflagrations, when fiery tongues leap from roof to roof, consuming, in their hot hunger, everything in their path. Who has seen any of these sinister monsters at work and has not felt within him the urge to pray? For in this mighty onward rush man's strength look dwarfed and his powers of deliverance seem mocking in their very insufficiency. If, then, it is only the storm or some other upheaval of nature which can bring the Atheist to his knees before the God whom he has scorned and derided, how much more should we who believe beg God for light, so as to be taught without the terrible heralds of His own physical creation.

Then there are domestic evils which break up that nearest approach to heaven in this world, the home—quarreling, lack of affection, unfaithfulness, divorces, and the like. There are besides personal evils from which the individual can suffer in the loss of property, friends, good name, fortune, life and health. And all the while his moral horizon can be darkened by the ugly spectres of scandals, murders, blasphemies, heresies—spectres which he may release in an unholy hour from the dark dungeon of his own black heart, or else which flit before his eyes to haunt, scandalize or seduce him. And whoso has not felt the bitter sting of one or more of these afflictions, does not know that they have driven many men to-day into a blind fatalism which makes them believe that they are merely the butt and plaything of a sinister deity. Do not these afflictions breed pessimism and discouragement amongst those who know not how to pray for release from them? That man's life is a warfare is not only a Scriptural word, it is the verdict of human existence and experience. This truth would be the most discouraging fact in life were we not aware that there is a Father above, who is willing to help us if we but call on Him; who, by the protecting Hand of His loving care and providence is able to keep us from making shipwreck in the storms that blow and the waves that surge.

MEANING OF THE PETITION

Now when we cry for deliverance from evil, do we ask the Almighty to take everything from us that is unpleasant or trying to our pampered, flabby human nature? Do we ask Him to make our lives one round of pleasure, one unclouded day? Are we asking Him somehow—anyhow—to enable us to grow strong, cautious, wise and holy without a struggle? Is our prayer the craven whimpering of those who have lost their morals? Most certainly not. For when we pray to be delivered from evil we beseech God to keep from us those evils which we cannot overcome, those evils that would break us or hold us back in the great work of our salvation. We ask Him to help us to extricate ourselves from the pit into which we have fallen through our lack of caution, foresight and circumspection; the pit into which we have fallen through our laziness, weakness or perverseness; the pit into which perhaps we have fallen through no conscious fault of our own. We do not ask that we be saved from ourselves, our moral or natural enemies, as if by miracle, without any exertion of our own. We cry for the stout heart, strong arm, the dauntless courage, the tough will to do our best in the face of odds over which we have none, or only partial, control. Because we are sons of God, with an eternal destiny, we see everything in the light of the other world. And so, whilst our human nature is looking for a surcease of the untoward agencies at work within or without us, we look beyond to the next world where the only true evil, in the full sense of the word, exists—namely, eternal failure to save our souls. In other words, we pray to be delivered from each and every one of those evils that can and do play havoc with the supernatural life of our souls. As for the rest, we pray God to teach us to make the disappointments and disadvantages of life stepping-stones to a higher, fuller, completer life of union with Him. This is the Christian philosophy of suffering and adversity, the philosophy stated in the shortest, clearest form in the last Petition of the Lord's Prayer.

And just because we are members of one vast family,

created by the same God and depending upon His bounty, our solicitude is not confined to ourselves alone. Our pity goes out to those near us by blood or friendship or kindness, who are being tried in the crucible of suffering. With that selflessness which comes from suffering we pray God for those to whom we owe so much in life, for those, even, who have injured us, for those, also, who, though we do not know or see, are still entitled to our good will, sympathy, support and prayers. We catch up in our arms the whole wide world to present it in our prayers to the Heavenly Father, not only because all are our brothers in Christ but also because all are children of the Father in Heaven. We do this for the very good reason that we know that there are no step-children in God's sight. All are dear to Him, since He died for all. And so we trust that for the sake of the known and unknown brethren He will deign to incline a favorable ear to our petitions.

As can be seen, the whole teaching of praying for deliverance from evil is the natural outgrowth of the faith which we have in God. Because He exists, because He is Goodness Itself, and therefore ready to help, we believe that just as soon as He sees that we progress, that we will welcome assistance, He will undoubtedly give us every good gift; not perhaps in the way and fashion we crave and petition, for His ways fortunately are not our ways, but what will be best in His sight in the long run. Hence we must remember to be resigned if God in His infinite Wisdom does not hear us in our own fashion. Would it not be blasphemous to expect God to accommodate Himself to our limited vision and wisdom, to forego His own knowledge of what is best for us in order to grant our prayer just as we see fit to put it? Would the glory of God be increased if every prayer we uttered were answered in our own way? Could the world go on if every prayer were answered literally? No, knowing God to be a loving Father, we are determined to allow Him to work out His own designs in our own regard in His own Divine ways. We will keep this consoling thought vivid in our minds all the time—that no cry for help, if uttered with the proper disposition, goes un-

heard. No good prayer has ever been in vain. In Him, then, we put all our trust, not doing Him the indignity of seeking Him out only when human means and measures have proved unavailing. We will beg Him to deliver us from evil, so that His glory may be enhanced and our trust and confidence in Him may be increased. If we pray with this spirit we know in advance that our prayers will be heard. And so, with joy, we can add to our prayers the consoling words which Jesus first taught us to use, "Amen! Thy will be done, for Thine are the ways of wisdom and knowledge—Amen, Amen."

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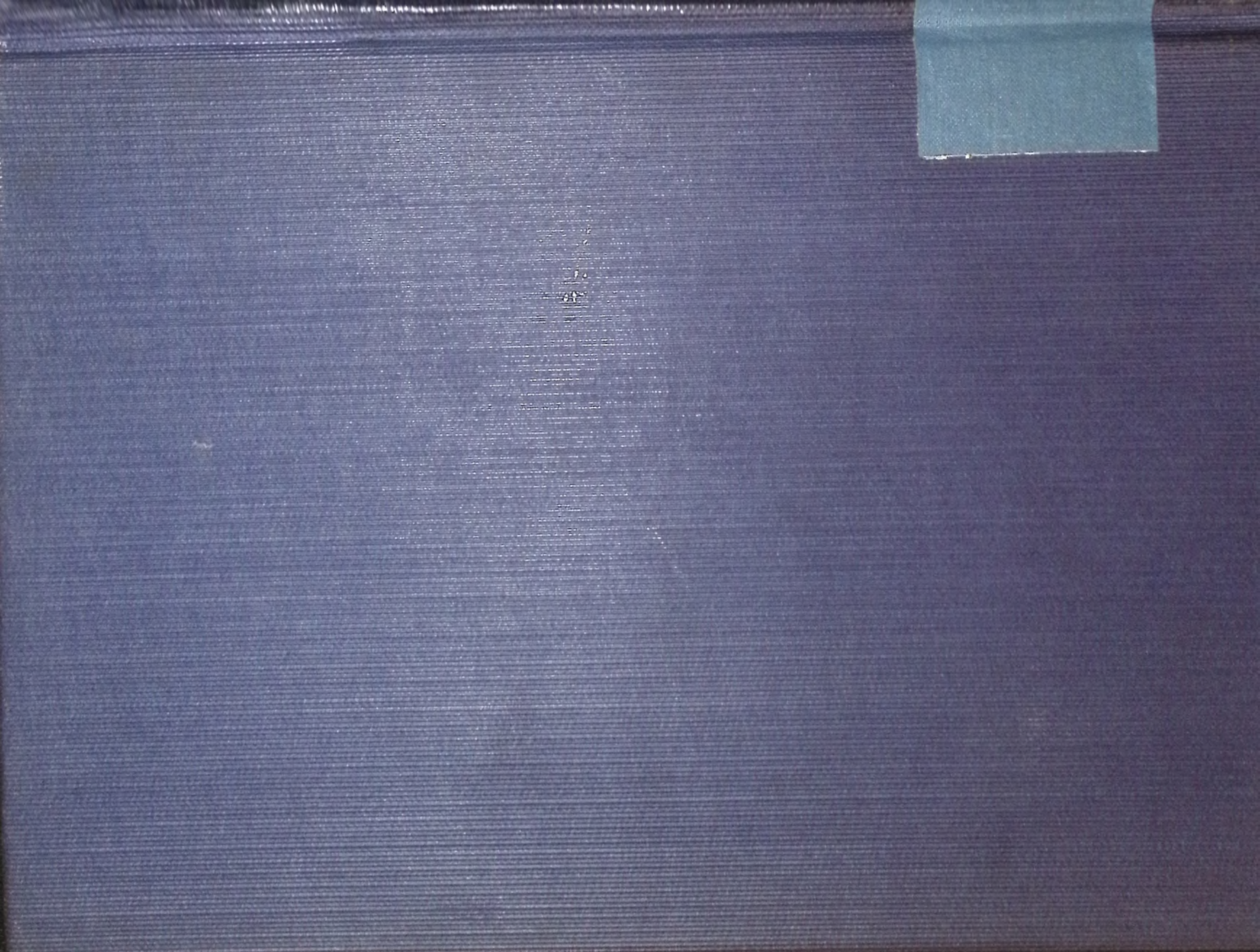
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